

# CATCH DA FLAVA

JAN/FEB 2007

regent park news magazine

VOLUME 12 ISSUE 3

[www.catchdaflava.com](http://www.catchdaflava.com)

## URBAN DEVELOPMENT ISSUE

MAP OF THE NEW REGENT PARK

THE SLOW CITIES MOVEMENT

IN CONVERSATION WITH JOHN CLARKE

**A greener T.O.**

it's all in your head  
Tdotwire epidemic

### ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

what to think of quebec's nation status

mosques of regent park

saving regent's trees

moving back

the michael richards outburst

Youth Health and Culture Magazine Serving Regent Park and the Greater Toronto Area



# VOLUME 12 ISSUE 2 JANUARY / FEBRUARY 2007



## LET CATCH DA FLAVA BE YOUR VOICE

**CATCH DA FLAVA** youth magazine is published by the Regent Park Focus Media Arts Centre. The magazine is distributed free to libraries, community groups, and selected schools across downtown Toronto.

**CATCH DA FLAVA** welcomes letters and articles from young people (up to 24 years of age). Submissions should be **NO LONGER THAN 1000 WORDS IN LENGTH.**

If you would like more information about how you can contribute to **CATCH DA FLAVA**, call us at **(416) 863-1074** or submit directly to **CATCHMAIL@CATCHDAFLAVA.COM**

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# EDITOR'S DESK:



*Above: detail of UPBAG's the Soft City. Featured here, the CN Tower. Photo by UPBAG.*

If any of you have been traipsing about Toronto's local art events over the past year or so, it's likely you've encountered the work of the Upper Parkdale Benevolent Art Guild, or UPBAG ([www.upbag.com](http://www.upbag.com)) for short. Since the summer of 2005 they've been exhibiting their "Soft City" installation, an urban topographical sculpture made of foam, felt, and cotton stuffing, at a variety of locations. It contains stuffed replicas of several Toronto landmarks as well as the stuffed architecture dreamed up by UPBAG members and the general public. The original "Upburg Settlement," first displayed in 2005 as part of AlleyJaunt, a celebration of local art in local places based in the Trinity-Bellwoods neighbourhood, grew over the following months into the Soft City and has since been displayed at the Toronto the Good Festival of Architecture and Design, Doors Open Toronto, and the Power Plant, among others.

The appeal of the Soft City is the message behind it - especially resonant in these anomic times. According to UPBAG member Yvonne Ng, the Soft City speaks to the idea "that cities sort of exist as hard materials, infrastructure and buildings and stuff, but what makes a city a city is all the soft ele-

ments, and the way we invest all these hard structures with meaning and emotion and history." Many of the buildings incorporated in the Soft City "are inspired by buildings that we're surrounded by in Toronto," Ng explains, "but some of them are buildings from our imagination, our childhoods, or just crazy things we make up." The point is that space, cities, or buildings only become a meaningful context or community when we start investing it with purpose, thinking, creating, and living in it.

It's a theme especially relevant to this issue of Catch da Flava, in which we explore the idea of urban renewal. As the Soft City suggests, urban renewal means more than just revitalizing a city's buildings - it also means revitalizing a city's ideas. After all, buildings are only a small part of what makes a city. Ultimately, it is the people who inhabit them, and the ideas they create, that leads to meaningful and genuine transformation in a city. We here at Regent Park Focus try to use Catch da Flava and the articles local youth contribute as a platform for the exchange of such ideas. It's just one part in the ever-continuing process of urban renewal.

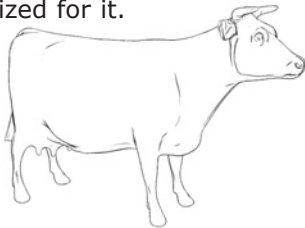
JAMES SANDHAM, ed.

# WHAT'S YOUR BEEF: The Michael Richards outburst



**FIONA**

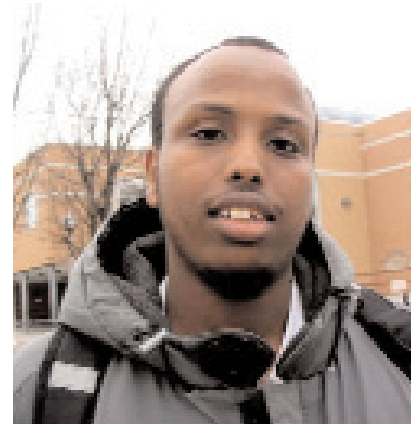
My input is that I don't think he is "racist racist." Deep down inside, all of us have some racism in us no matter if we want to admit it or deny it. About his apology, well, I could care less. If that is the way that he sees his point of view, then that's his point of view and ain't no one going to say anything. And he said he was pissed off, but even if you are pissed off, you still made a comment like that and it's unacceptable either way. So it should be like Mel Gibson: Mel Gibson made a crude comment and he was scrutinized for it so Kramer should also be scrutinized for it.



**ANONYMOUS**

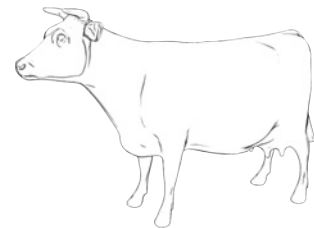
Well I heard after it had happened on the radio or on the TV that he had made some racial remarks, and then I saw his apology, but I still think it is inappropriate. I think he should have had better control of himself considering he is a speaker. He is somebody that is trained and that is his job; he should have had more control. I don't believe that it was a mistake, he did it on purpose, and those are his real thoughts and feelings. And I think it was really wrong, really wrong. And his apology I don't think was much. I think he apologized because he felt he had to, he was told to do it, which is good, to a point, but I still think what he said was his real feelings.

By da Flava's  
JERRY ZABARTE



**ANONYMOUS**

Yeah, I heard some of it. Two black guys were disturbing him and he went ballistic on them. He was saying this-this about black guys and stuff like that. No matter what, I don't think he had the right to do that 'cause, you know, he is older than that and he should be able to control himself. Not just 'cause he is old, he is a millionaire, he cannot just do anything. So he has to know how to hold himself around people. I would not accept his apology 'cause the whole thing, the entire race, it's not just the two guys in front of you, it's the whole race.



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### WAS IT WISE FOR THE HARPER GOVERNMENT TO RECOGNIZE QUEBEC AS A NATION WITHIN CANADA?

# YES

#### THE QUEBECOIS ARE A DISTINCT FOUNDING NATION OF THE COUNTRY OF CANADA

After eleven-months of misgovernment it's good to hear Stephen Harper has finally done something right: he has recognized the Quebecois as a nation within Canada. It's always good to have some truth and maturity in politics, and Harper has displayed just that in this approach to the treatment of a minority group.

The Quebecois, after all, were one of the founding people of Canada, yet since that day in 1867 every step of their journey has been about survival. They were politically silenced, economically exploited, and socially marginalized. They were kept down for centuries, but now the Quebecois have woken and are fighting back. Harper - regardless of what else happens in his government - will be remembered in history for his straight talk regarding the Quebec question.

The Quebecois is a distinct ethno-cultural group in a territorial region with common political and economic institutions and a unique and common language. There isn't a better candidate for national recognition than the Quebecois. These facts have been recognized and widely-accepted within Quebec for the last forty years. By pre-empting the Bloc's more separatist-friendly motion in the House of Commons, and by saying what needs to be said, Stephen Harper should be rewarded for his honesty in the next election.

"Earthquakes have power, and space cannot end, but nothing has justice except that which has reason and acquaintance with the divine."

- Plutarch: "Aristides the Just",  
Translated by Wilmot H. McCutchen  
SAMMY LAO

# NO

#### THE MOTION IS MEANINGLESS; WHAT DEFINES A "QUEBECOIS" ANYWAY?

The Quebecois are now a nation within Canada. Congratulations. Now can someone please explain what exactly this means? And how did such a vague motion even get passed anyway?

When discussing the motion in the House of Commons on November 22, both Harper and Graham used the terms "Quebecois" and "Quebecers" interchangeably. Later, when talking with the press, Harper explained that "Quebecois" is merely French for "Quebecers." I guess Quebecers are just people who live in Quebec, just like Torontonians live in Toronto. Ergo, by this logic, everyone living in Quebec are a nation within Canada.

But that doesn't quite make sense. According to the Cambridge Dictionary a nation is "a country, especially when thought of as a large group of people living in one area with their own government, language, traditions, etc." Well, Quebecers all live in one area, but they certainly aren't a country (at this point), and while they do have their own provincial government it's still overseen by Ottawa. So that doesn't clarify anything.

A second definition for nation is "a large group of people of the same race who share the same lan-

guage, traditions and history." But not all Quebecers speak the same language (some speak English, some speak French; many speak both) and I can't imagine that everyone in Quebec shares the same traditions. For example, my grade school French teacher grew up in Quebec and her family had tortierre every Christmas; would that that therefore mean every family in Quebec eats a tortierre during the holiday season, and they all celebrate Christmas? It seems unlikely.

In any case, I think this will suffice to illustrate the meaninglessness of the whole "recognition-of-the-Quebec-nation-within-Canada" thing. After all, the motion didn't even mention changing the legal rights or function of Quebec, and Harper has specifically stated that this isn't about separation but "recognition" (another term that could use defining) - so why then is the House of Commons taking the time to discuss and vote on this? Don't we have troops in Afghanistan? Aren't there more important issues to debate?

By da Flava's  
STEVE BLAIR





Above: User photo from a profile on Tdotwire

**I**t's after school. You sit on the bus eagerly anticipating the stop to the place you call "the hood." Scrambling out of the bus and into your cozy house, you throw your bag on to the floor and glide across the living room to the computer. You quickly type in the website address as if your life depended on it, waiting for what seems like a lifetime. Finally, you're at ease as the letters TDW pop up on the screen. You login.

If this is a regular routine for you, you may have Tdotitis, a severe addiction to the website Tdotwire (<http://www.tdotwire.com>).

Like HI5 and ZUUP, Tdotwire (TDW) also allows users network and browse through blogs and profiles. And with approximately 5200 members online daily, it's no wonder why TDW has grown to be one of the most addictive forum site for teens who reside in the GTA and Toronto. Successfully running for the past 4 years, the number of new members registering on TDW is growing everyday.

But Tdotwire is much more than your average run-of-the-mill forum site. It's a place where teenagers as well as young adults connect through pictures,

profiles, forums, tag boards and private messages. It's a site where promoters put provocative flyer ads of their up-and-coming all ages' events. And of course, let's not forget about ratings, the leading reason why most Tdotwire members post their photogenic, enticing and racy photos of themselves.

"Tdotwire is like a drug for me. I get to look at pretty girls and privately message them. A lot of my boys have an account on Tdotwire. It's just a fun way to waste time," says Jun, a grade 12 male student of J.C.I.

TDW has grown to be more than "just a waste of time." It's the new virtual reality where teens find themselves entwined between actuality and cyberspace.

**"Tdotwire is like a drug for me...  
It's just a fun way to waste time"**

**- Jun**

**CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE...**

This could partially explain why some teens grow to develop a dependency on TDW. Self-esteem plays a big role for TDW members. Viewers who browse pages can rate a person's profile (in terms of looks) from 1 and 10 (1 being terrible and 10 being spectacular). Consequently, these ratings either raise your confidence or provoke you to put a paper bag over your head.

"I'm confident and I know I'm sexy. I like going on TDW, because of the forums and the ability to put my opinion out there. I debate and argue with people online. Shoot, I've even met some pretty fit girls on there in real life," says Chris Roget of Birchmount C.I. "Besides the girls, I like the forums because everyone is in a close age range and I can relate to them better."

Furthermore, TDW forums give teenagers the chance to speak their mind about a wide variety of topics like music, arts, school, fashion - or even the most ridiculous ideas only a high school student could think of.

"I once saw a thread from this guy in Brampton," says Kaye Dante Melendez, Grade 10 of J.C.I. "It was about how Anna Nicole Smith's baby would look if she was impregnated by a horse."

But while the outcome of a half-animal, half-washed-up-blonde-celebrity-baby threads can cer-

**"It was about how Anna Nicole Smith's baby would look if she was impregnated by a horse."  
- Kaye**

tainly make for gripping reading, there is a more reasonable explanation as to why high school students are hooked on TDW. When asked how they found out about TDW, Myspace, HI5 or ZUUP, 4 out of 5 high school students asked reply they "found out through a friend and have been continuing usage ever since." In other words, the popularity of these sites stems from their ability to keep peers connected and up-to-date with one another. These sites become the crucial factor of the social networks they facilitate. And as such, they become the new hang-out, the new after-school extra-curricular activity, the new Lava Life for teenagers. Like its predecessors Myspace and HI5, TDW has turned into the cyberspace club for students and young adults alike.

Unfortunately there is no intervention for the victims of TDW. When you become a member, there's no way out.

By da Flava's  
GILLIAN JOHNSON

## **Wanna produce your own tracks for FREE?**



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*Above: view of Regent Park north*

If there is any community accustomed to negative stereotype and systemic discrimination from the public, it's the residents of Regent Park. The neighbourhood has long been exposed to contemptuous or pessimistic judgment from the media and the general public, and this cynical view of Regent Park has caused the community to be labelled one of Toronto's high-risk communities.

When I first came to Toronto for further studies, from a moderately well established community, I had been informed about Regent Park as being one of the most dangerous areas in Toronto. This information was given to me even before I was able to locate it on the map and before I was ever able to visit the community in person. My educational institution also played a key role in shaping my first perception of Regent Park by using orientation forms to advise international students that "it is in students' best interest to stay away." But all this did was arouse my curiosity about the mystery that is Regent Park.

I have had the privilege of meeting a student in my program who is a resident of Regent Park, and on

our first encounter he had challenged my negative perceptions of the place. He was more than delighted to show me his neighbourhood in an effort to change my perceptions of the Park.

Based on my preconceptions I already had a mental picture of the neighbourhood. I thought I would see gangsters sitting out in the court yard, drug addicts running around after their next high, or - worse - hear gun shots blazing through the neighbourhood.

On my very first visit to the Regent Park I was stunned to see the rundown buildings, vandalism, shattered windows, graffiti, and displaced garbage. My first reaction was to call a fellow student and tell her what I have seen. In my opinion, this was not "a high-risk neighbourhood or ghetto" - this was a neighbourhood where poverty, unemployment and under employment are real issues. However; the media and society magnify the crime and drug use which in turn have given Regent Park its horrible label.

When I look at Regent Park and its residents I see people that are intelligent, people that are asking for

**CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE...**



proper representation, and who have been shut out of society. I see marginalized low-income young people asking for equal opportunities for education and social and recreational facilities.

With the new revitalization of the area I challenge the residents of Regent Park to live a life that are exemplary to others, to live above the stereotypes and the negative perceptions that many in society hold. I believe this revitalization is the best time for community action. With a new physical environment, this is the perfect opportunity for the Regent Park residents to renew their vision and change the

negative perceptions. I encourage the community to strive to be an influential neighbourhood and to produce citizens of Canada that will be mentors or models for other low income or marginalized people.

I am sure Regent Park will soon stand out in this multicultural and metropolitan city as place to live and break the circle.

By da Flava's  
LEONARD EDWARDS, 23

## POETRY CORNER

### **A MYSTIC SONNET**

The sky tonight upon my wall,  
I watch the gray and shaded lines,  
Shadows gaze at me and fall,  
They hit my eyes like painted vines.  
Tree branches hit my window hard,  
The gift of vision comes to me,  
The game hands me a fallen card,  
Pain of the storm now I can see.  
The sonnet pours out like water,  
The shadow cast begins to shake,  
Do you beseech this fallen daughter?  
Waves embrace the mystic lake.  
Rhyming words come with a joy  
Shadows moving me like a toy.

LUDA ZADOROVICH

### **MEDIA CLASS, 4TH PERIOD**

let's look at magazines!  
cautiously choosing Vogue,  
dreading what's inside,  
i slowly began.  
skinny women, expressionless faces.  
zombies, modelling anorexia.  
disgusted,  
i shut my eyes.  
during the class discussion later,  
the boys loved it.  
"sexy, frisky, daring,  
bold, risky, wild."  
disgusted,  
i shut my ears.  
see no evil.  
hear no evil.  
but i still couldn't...  
wasn't able to...  
shut my mind.

NAILA OBLAID



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*Above: storefront of the Cabbagetown Restaurant and Bar, on Parliament Street.*

**T**he Cabbagetown Restaurant on the corner of Parliament and Spruce Street has been the center for complaints from the neighboring residents for many months now. There have been reports made against the restaurant about its customers on the patio conducting criminal activities and creating uneasy feelings towards the neighbors and those who walk by.

The restaurant is now at risk of losing its liquor license for two violations and also because the neighbors simply don't want the drunk customers near their homes causing ruckus.

On Sunday January 21st, members of Catch da Flava attended an event in support of the Cabbagetown Restaurant, during which we spoke to John Clarke, the organizer of OCAP.

**Catch da Flava:** *Why is OCAP here today?*

As I don't need to tell you, this whole area is being subjected to a process of gentrification. They [Cabbagetown residents] want to turn this into what

I might call a yuppie colony. This restaurant is one of the places that still exists where poor people can gather and socialize, and they want to close it down - not because of any of their ridiculous allegations about immorality and Sodom and Gomorrah or whatever, that's all just a load of fabricated nonsense. What they recognize is, if you're going to break a community you have to take away the places where people have a sense of belonging, where people have a sense of congregating together, and that's why they want to close this place down. There's no doubt about that. So, because this is a restaurant and a place where people grab a beer, they've gone the route of taking the liquor license.

**The idea of the mixed income neighborhood is a big lie**

**- John Clarke**

**CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE...**

They've dragged Victor and his father, who actually owns the place and are immigrant people from China, they've dragged them before the alcohol and gaming commission to try to take away the license. The hearing that took place was a farce, it was a kangaroo court, and there's no doubt in my mind that on February 7th they're going to bring down a verdict to take away the license.

**Catch da Flava:** *What will happen then?*

Victor has the right to an appeal, so we're going to make sure that there is proper legal representation this time, and he gets to argue a case that is legally sound and credible and gets to expose the nonsense being thrown against him. At the same time we're going to rally the community to support him. We want people who live in this neighborhood, whether they are people of good conscience or whether they're people directly affected by the poverty, to come out and show their support to Victor Jiang by signing a petition against the actions of the Cabbagetown Business Improvement Association and gathering here to eat and socialize. This restaurant is important to Victor and his family, this place is their livelihood. This restaurant is also an important gathering place for the community, but its more than that: it's a symbol of a whole process

**“If you're going to break a community you have to take away the places... where people have a sense of congregating together, and that's why they want to close this place down**

**- John Clarke**

of trying to destroy a community that has been here for generations. I mean, for God's sake, one of the finest books of Canadian literature is about the working class neighbourhood of Cabbagetown. It's about what this community has always been, and they wanna turn it into a fluffy yuppie paradise and I think that's something that's gotta be resisted; it's something that's gotta be fought. This neighborhood needs to be a place where poor people can live and this community needs to be defended.

**“They want to turn this into... a yuppie colony”**

**- John Clarke**

**Catch da Flava:** *How do you plan to do that?*

The local Cabbagetown business association put up money to pay duty police officers to harass this place. The cops, we know who they serve and protect, think they can sweep this place away. What we hope to do is build enough of a movement around defending the Cabbagetown Restaurant that the political price for closing this place down is too great and they back away. We're not gonna resolve this by having polite meetings with Pam McConnell or talking to the cops' liaison people, we're gonna have to deal with this as a fight. It is a fight and they've attacked us and we're gonna fight back.

**Catch da Flava:** *How is this notion of revitalization going to affect the low income community?*

You know, the idea of the mixed income neighborhood is a big lie. I don't think in an economy like the one that we live in, that if upscale people move in to a poor neighborhood they want a mixed neighborhood. No, they want a neighborhood that elevates their property values and improves their quality of life and they want the poor gone! I'm very, very suspicious of this notion of transforming Regent Park into a so-called mixed neighborhood. I know they have similar plans for Lawrence Heights. I know they have similar plans for poor communities throughout the city and I think that is something that should be opposed because it's not gonna produce a place where the lion lays down with a lamb. Its gonna be a means to expel poor people from communities they live in.

*Tune in to "Hands off Cabbagetown" at [www.regentpark.tv](http://www.regentpark.tv) to find out more about the issue.*

By da Flava's  
STEVE BLAIR & JERRY ZABARTE



# FROM UTOPIA TO LUXURY:



### Artist's Statement:

Displaying the word "Luxury" on a banner hanging on a deserted Regent Park building known as 'The Projects' seems by at glance problematic because it could be read as if Public Housing itself is a Luxury. Although the banner contains a subversive twist by referring to Luxury as what is left on television after programming has ended, with the off-program television snow as background and containing the text a "place to call home." The banner still doesn't quite seem to fit on-site, although there is always many options of readings.

On the other hand, if the Luxury banner was displayed on one of the new Condo developments or even on the surprisingly similar looking architectural drawings from the Regent Park revitalization plans -- the proximity of the banner parallel with the site would assimilate almost completely, and the fate of the sign would probably not be noticed at all from any of the new developments.

The reason to propose the banner displayed on Public Housing is to illustrate by juxtaposing the spatial clash between two ideological positions of structures built in the same city. The visualization that this project wants to enlighten is a long going paradigm shift in housing and public policies that slowly is moving from utilitarian to laissez-faire. Projects all over North America are being torn down -- and fewer get replaced like the case of Regent Park, which is only possible with private investments from the selling of land. But many Projects especially, in the US, disappear completely from the radar. The current situation of Public Housing in New Orleans just to mention one, illustrates the 'new' agenda of urban planning.

There are many questions to be answered with the Condo Boom in Toronto and the demolishing and revitalization of Regent Park. Why did the macro scale plan of public housing estates not work in Toronto when it works in other cities? Why was Regent Park for at least a decade neglected by the city to the point of urban blight? Could there have been an ideology that has criminalized the neighborhood? This is not to claim that the general revitalization plan for Regent Park is unprepossessing, but is instead to focus on what the stigma may reveal under a larger picture of a hegemonic ideology.

When Public Housing was built it came with a post-war ideology led by the Bauhaus School that saw the new industrial capacity as a possibility to erect better social conditions. It was idealism lead by ideas of utopia of how to distribute and collectively change social behavior by distributing modern amenities and stabilities. Regent Park like many similar estates around the world at that time was modeled on the ideas of Corbusier and Gropius and in this case particularly influenced by Howard's book titled "Garden Cities of To-Morrow." This book offered a vision of towns free of slums and enjoying the benefits of both town and country.

The Condo Boom of cultural extravagance and consumer culture where luxury and pleasure is the drive for individual entrepreneurship and success has deserted the idea of the common good. It is a desire driven by economy put into practice by mass culture that is more about fetish, affect and leisure. This shift from Utopia to Luxury - from collective to individual - is the effect of a long going strategy of imposing the de facto neo-liberal global economy. The government as a result of these policies is losing ground where the power and capacity to address previously critical social liabilities evaporates.

With the "Luxury" banner placed on a Regent Park building, it is an attempt to cut through the smoke screen of culture and identity policies that prevents us from seeing the government's increasing detachment from our body and unravel the new spatial frontiers where housing, for the most of us, is never going to be luxury. On Sunday, December 22nd, 1946 Mayor Robert H. Saunders, when he endorsed the idea of building Regent Park on a regularly scheduled radio speech on C.H.U.M. Toronto, delivered an important message "... the true greatness of a city is measured not by its artistic and commercial attainment alone, but also by the home of the citizens and the conditions under which the least affluent of them are forced to live."

Luxury Displacement is part of the CRYSTAL PALACE series

The Crystal Palace is an ongoing artistic research investigating the state's gradual distancing and disconnecting its power from the citizen's body.



# SLOW CITIES, FAST WORLD: Urban renewal around the world



Urban revitalization is an ambiguous term, but for many it is associated with ideas of growth and progress, with moving forward in a new and dynamic way. At least, that's what it's often associated with here in North America. But across the pond in Europe a growing number of cities are starting to redefine the term. For them, urban revitalization means a return to old ways, the rediscovery of traditional economies, and a general slowing down of life. It means forgetting about growth and instead shrinking their vision to the local level. Seem retrograde? Welcome to the Slow Cities.

The Slow Cities Movement was founded in 1999 as an offshoot of the Slow Food Movement. Slow Food, established in Italy by Carlo Petrini in 1986, began as a reaction to what Petrini saw as the negative by-products of globalization - the standardization of tastes, the increasingly frantic pace of life, the lack of personal connection with one's urban environment. The two movements have since grown to be deeply intertwined, sharing a common philosophy and social goals centred on the idea that people shouldn't forget to take pleasure in everyday lived

experience. Petrini soon found that he wasn't alone in this way of thinking, and the Slow Movement was born.

As the name suggests, Slow Movement supports the ability to live slowly. Slow Cities aren't trying to provide their residents with new highways, bigger commercial developments or rapid transit systems, nor do they want global connectivity or multi-million dollar cultural institutions. Instead, they want to let people relax - they want to slow things down so people can take their time and actually enjoy what they're doing.

**“Speed and efficiency, the Slow Movements argue, have become pointless obsessions leading to the regulation of everything from what we eat to when we sleep”**

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In practice, this means fostering local, organic food production methods, traditional forms of cooking, and urban designs that provide space for people to stop, take a break, and talk with their neighbours.

Speed and efficiency, the Slow Movements argue, have become pointless obsessions leading to the regulation of everything from what we eat to when we sleep, and when and where we socialize. The Slow Movements contend that speed and efficiency have become so dominant in our lives that the end to which they are supposedly employed - the creation of free time - has been forgotten: our time ends up considerably less free and increasingly constrained.

But this, they say, is a paradox of our own making and can be resolved by creating communities that foster a more locally-attuned lifestyle.

The Slow Movement might sound idealistic, but it's a concept with growing legitimacy. And although a city must have a population under 50 000 to officially qualify as a Slow City, many of the Slow Movement's primary principles are nonetheless popping up in urban revitalization projects in some of Canada's largest cities. Slow Food chapters have already been established in Vancouver and Calgary, for example.

**“Slow Cities aren't trying to provide their residents with new highways, bigger commercial developments or rapid transit systems... Instead they want to let people relax.”**

But the Movement's larger impact is its recognition of the need for community space and environmentally attuned economies. The Slow Movement realizes that revitalization does not happen from the top down. Change cannot be forced. It must be fostered.

And this means creating communities where people have space to talk, to solidify a vision of their community, and can then take action to implement it in tune with local patterns of life in the community. Appropriately, these principles that are being employed - slowly - in an ever-wider number of urban revitalization schemes.

By da Flava's  
JAMES SANDHAM



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**L**anes reserved for public transit. Cash rebates for purchasing energy-efficient appliances. A recycling program expanded to include kitchen waste. Toronto Council has made it clear that they're trying to make this an eco-friendly city. Unfortunately, external efforts (such as those from the municipality) are largely ineffective because they address only the problem instead of extinguishing the source. What is needed is a whole new frame of mind.

Is throwing your pop can in the recycling bin going to change the world? No, but it could change your life, choice by choice. Here's how to adjust your perspective to be environmentally friendly and subsequently increase how much you get out of life.

### SEVEN STEPS TO A HEAVENLY EARTH:

Make all decisions by asking yourself, "What's best for the earth?" This doesn't mean becoming a hippy. It means thinking about how your actions affect you and the environment.

Relinquish ownership of the earth. You are a temporary occupant of this planet. Everything is on loan, and needs to be returned the way it came or better. Become a minimalist. All objects were at some point

constructed from raw materials and therefore they too are on loan. Don't take more than what you need.

Make an effort to be aware of the earth. Learn to appreciate nature and being outdoors. Think of how small you are compared to the entire planet and all of humanity.

Develop an awareness of your immediate surroundings. Notice how someone reacts to your smile, or admire the walkway to your apartment building after you've picked up the garbage by the curb.

Acknowledge your connectedness with the earth and what that means to your life. Discover the interactions happening between you and your environment.

Unify all areas of your life: your mind, your body, humanity, and nature.

All of this is easier said than done. With every active choice you develop your environmental orientation. At first this increase in awareness may seem like an information overload. You may have to continually refocus to be alert. But who knew that catching a bit of Green Urbanitis could improve mental health?

MARIE GEDGE



# ASK DA SEXPERT

Navigating dating without  
getting caught in the quicksand



**M**y parents were high school sweethearts. They met when they were 16 years old, got married at 19, had five children and haven't looked back since. My experiences in courtship have been far from similar.

Which isn't to say that marriage at 19 would have made me happy - far from it. But the idea that there is that one person that completes, challenges, and exposes traits in you that you yourself didn't even know existed is something for which I will never stop striving. It's the hopeless romantic in me.

There is a portion of my peer group that similarly hopeless and romantic - they are "in love?" as they say - but when I see many of these relationships I am not convinced. Many of these relationships are based on convenience, "the comfort factor," or personal insecurity, and this can create a loss of perception and inability to confront the reality of a situation. Sometimes you have to step back and see a relationship for what it is.

For example, there are those who smudge the boundaries between friendship and love. This happens a lot and someone always ends up heartbro-

ken. Unfortunately, I've been on both sides too many times; it's easy to fall in like with your friends: they're great people, you already know you get along with them, and there is always that nagging question at the back of your mind - "what if?"

The problem is that this question is often only further investigated at the one time most young romantics feel confident enough to confront their emotions - that is, when they're drunk. After your fourth cup of liquid courage, emotional questions often seem to make a lot more sense; you can't understand why it never occurred to you earlier that you and Jake were clearly meant to be together. He seems to be in a conversation but you just know that he will be more than understanding, even overjoyed, when you profess your undying love...

It's almost impossible to leave satisfied from a situation like this. At best there will be a sloppy hook-up and an extremely awkward future encounter where both parties claim to forget what happened that sordid night, although both know all too well. Things will return to normal eventually but the touch, sound, smell of that person, your friend, will never be quite the same. Even a hug from them, once comforting, can feel uneasy.

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Then there are the strangers, those random individuals that you can't help but notice. These ones have the uncanny ability to speak through a glance. You see them in passing - not everyday, but when they are around you can't help but notice. Even without words you already know this person, you start to build them up, and you see them as you want them to be.

Part of you wants to meet them but they are best left at distance. They will not meet the ideal that you have created. Luckily, this captivation only lasts for so long. Inevitably, you'll overhear them talking or

even end up meeting them - and with each word a part of the ideal you've come to love will die. To fall in love with an ideal inevitably ends in disappointment and heartbreak. It's sad. But it's true.

Yup, in the land of love there's a lot of quicksand. Sometimes marriage at 19 doesn't sound so bad after all.

By da Flava's  
SEXPERT

## TTC SUMMER JOBS:

### Youth opportunities

Youth 16-30 living in priority neighbourhoods including Regent Park and St. Jamestown who are out of work, out of school, and experiencing a difficult time entering the workforce.

A commitment has been made to hire 100 youth for the seasonal maintenance and summer job opportunities combined.

For full details on Summer Student Opportunities (approximately 5 months),

visit [www.toronto.ca/ttc/jobopps\\_students.htm](http://www.toronto.ca/ttc/jobopps_students.htm)

or phone 416-397-7317

## KIWANIS KIDS:

### Eat right

Kiwanis Boys & Girls Clubs is cooking up new ways to improve the nutrition of local children and youth thanks to a \$10 000 "Eat Right" Nutrition Grant from the Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada (BGCC).

The club will use the grant to purchase appliances and equipment, train staff and volunteers, facilitate enhancements to better meet the nutritional needs

of our members and provide healthy meals and snacks for hungry children and youth.

Congratulations Kiwanis from everyone at Catch da Flava!

By da Flava's  
STAFF

## PEACE TREE:

### Gets all lit up

On Thursday November 7, students from several classes at Nelson Mandela Park School braved the crisp winter winds to decorate an evergreen called the Peace Tree, located in Regent Park's Peace Garden. The children made their own beautiful paper decorations and with the assistance of their teachers, the Peace Tree organizers, and Toronto Argonaut Raymond Fontaine they placed their decorations on the Peace Tree giving it plenty of colour and holiday spirit.

The following night people of all ages from the Regent Park community gathered in the Peace Garden for the first annual lighting of the Peace Tree. The evening started with a festive candle lit carol sing with everyone's favourites. It was then time for the main attraction, and after a countdown the Peace Tree was finally lit for all to see.

By da Flava's  
STEVE BLAIR

# REGENT PARK TREES:

Need to be saved



*Above: trees in Regent park being cut down, photo by Tyrone MacLean-Wilson*

**A**s the redevelopment plans for Regent Park continue, the area is undergoing a massive transformation, one that affects more than just its present day residents. Last year's ribbon cutting ceremony not only announced the first phase of redevelopment for Regent Park, but also the first phase of doom for an urban forest.

Before Regent Park's revitalization began it was home to more than 1400 trees. A significant number were over 50 years old before the first phase of the six scheduled re-developments began. However, the City of Toronto's Forestry Services Department has stated that redevelopment would require the removal of a large majority of the existing trees. This is in direct contradiction to the city's goal of reaching 35% canopy cover. When I walked the first redevelopment zone a number of months ago with Todd Irvine, an urban forestry consultant, I observed at least two dozen trees of a size and condition worth preserving. Considering that there are six redevelopment zones and the plan was to save four trees in the first zone, will that mean only 24 of the 1400 trees will elude the chain saw?

Trees that are 50 years and older can never be replaced by newly planted trees. There are a myriad of reasons for this which can be further explored at [leaftoronto.org](http://leaftoronto.org), or by emailing [todd@leaftoronto.org](mailto:todd@leaftoronto.org). The bottom line is that these trees, our city's environmental and aesthetic sentinels, deserve and should be partnered with a new approach to urban renewal. We must avoid the disturbing and laughably stupid practice of chopping down trees and naming our streets after them, especially given the value they add to all levels of human society.

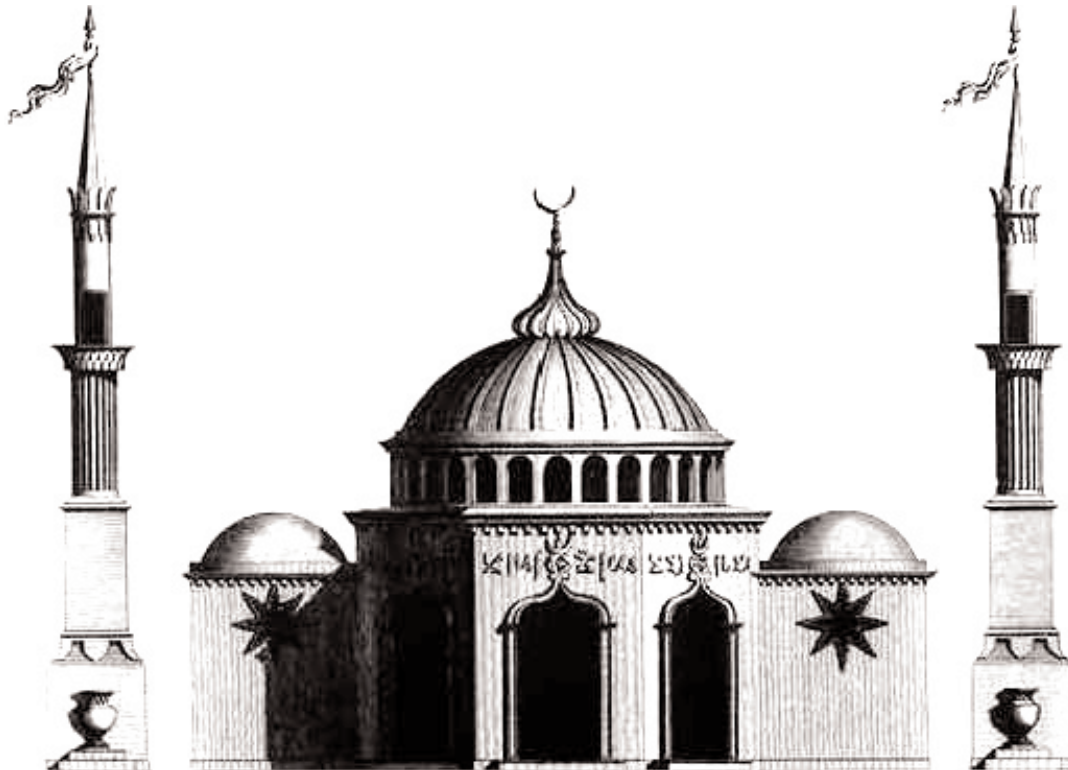
The operative word in Regent Park is "park", and what it conjures up in one's mind upon hearing it. I hope Toronto's citizenry will consider what we are losing if the plight of these trees is not factored into Regent Park's redevelopment.

*For more information contact [todd@leaftoronto.com](mailto:todd@leaftoronto.com)*

JANET ANDERSON

# REGENT PARK MOSQUES

A new form



*Above: example of a traditional Mosque*

**D**id you know that there are three mosques in Regent Park?

For those who are unaware, a mosque is a place of worship for followers of the monotheistic faith Islam. Muslims often refer to the mosque by its Arabic name, masjid. The word "mosque" in English refers to all types of buildings dedicated for Islamic worship, although there is a distinction in Arabic between the smaller, privately owned mosque and the larger, "collective" mosque (masjid jami) which offer community amenities.

The primary purpose of the mosque is as a place where Muslims can come together for prayer. Mosques are also known around the world for their importance to the Muslim community and their demonstration of Islamic architecture. They have developed from the open-air spaces such as the Quba Mosque and Masjid al-Nabawi in the seventh century, and today most have elaborate domes, minarets, and prayer halls.

Mosques originated on the Arabian Peninsula, but now exist on all the world's inhabited continents. They are not only places for worship and prayer, but also places to learn about Islam and meet fellow believers.

However the mosques at Regent Park are not made with domes nor do they have Islamic architecture. In fact, they are often located in basements and apartments. But despite humble exteriors, inside they are like a House of Commons, a place where the affairs of the community take place.

People from a variety of ethnic backgrounds come to pray in Regent Park mosques. Children go to learn how to read, write, and speak Arabic. They also have karate classes where they learn the art of defense. These mosques help kids that need assistance with math, science, or other school work.

Most Muslims try to go to the Mosque for Friday prayers. There are no statues or paintings in the mosque; rather, it is decorated with quotations from the Qur'an and with beautifully intricate tiled and painted patterns.

As the Muslim population grows, so does the need for a bigger mosque. The community is currently trying to build an actual mosque so that it can be seen from the outside and recognized for what it is: open to all, if one believes or not, and is there for the whole community.

By da Flava's  
IFTEKHAR "PRINCE" CHOWEHURY



# MOVING BACK:

What happens when  
the redevelopment's over?



Imagine after spending your whole life living in one place and suddenly moving because your neighborhood was going to be redeveloped. After two years you receive a letter in the mail inviting you to move back to your "home" - would you go back?

Tammy was twelve when her family was forced to move out of their co-operative housing unit because her community was to undergo redevelopment. Initially the redevelopment was supposed to take a year; eventually, it took two years to complete. After three years, former residents were given the opportunity to move back to the community on a short-term lease which could be renewed upon passing the trial period. Tammy's family decided against moving back. One reason was that during the redevelopment her family had immigrated to Canada. They had become acquainted with their new surroundings; Tammy's mom had found a job she enjoyed, and Tammy and her sister had finally made new friends.

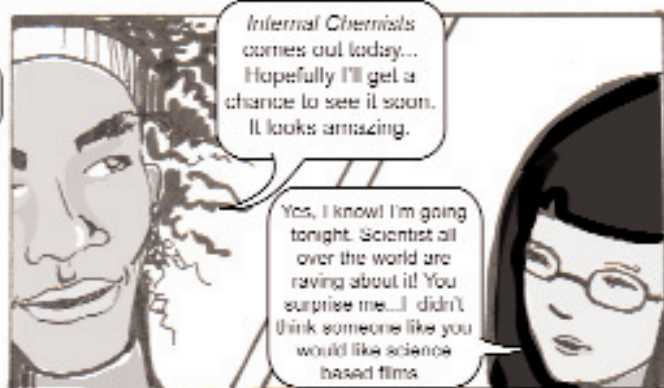
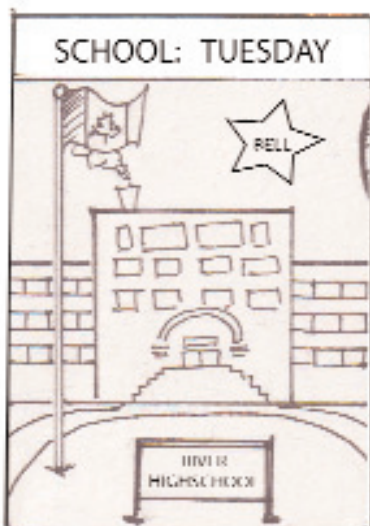
While Tammy is not from Regent Park, these issues may be some that Regent Park residents will face. Although many people feel they would love to come back home, moving back may not be very practical. If there are children involved parents may have to

find alternative schools and recreational activities for them. Moving, for children, can be a detrimental experience as they have to find new social groups and activities. Parents may be forced to find new jobs if they aren't able to commute to and from work.

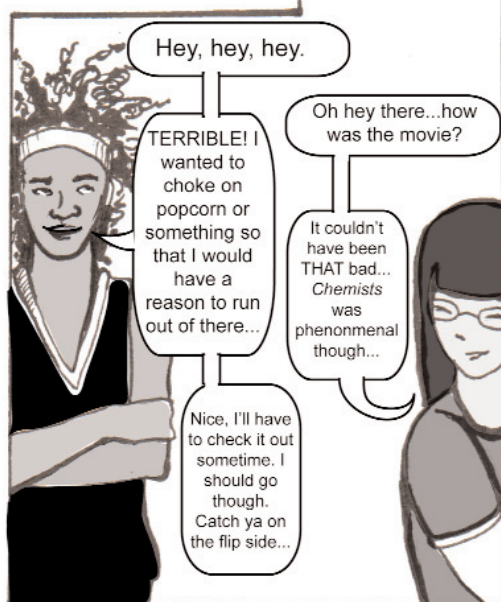
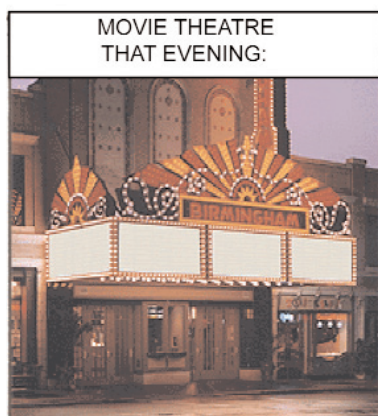
The cost of moving is a significant factor. When you move from one place to another you may have to pay movers, and pay to shut down utilities. Often, you will have to pay again to get these turned back on. In the case of Regent Park, many of these costs are being paid by TCHC, but certainly not all of them. Lastly, there may be conditions to moving back: your rent may have increased, or you may be on a fixed leasing term or, worse, a probationary period. All of these things must be taken into account before residents make the decision to move back "home".

Take a minute to think about it. If you had to go through all of this, would you? Does it matter that much to you where you live, or does your community mean so much that you couldn't see yourself living elsewhere happily?

By da Flava's  
TIANNA SALTUS







Iain Lew Kee



# THE PLAN:

The official word on  
what's in store for Regent Park

## LEGEND

-  4-Storey Buildings
-  6-Storey Apartment Buildings
-  8-Storey Apartment Buildings
-  Residential Towers
-  2-Storey Building Bases
-  Existing Buildings
-  Proposed Christian Resource Centre
-  Public Open & Green Spaces
-  Private & Semi-private Open & Green Spaces

