

Semaji

Black Community Resource Centre

Supporting Youth, Building Communities, A Holistic Approach

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Youth Study Interview

by Jason Selman



In the spring of 2010 as part of McGill university's Black Communities Demographic Project, Ann Marie Livingstone co-ordinated a research focus group entitled "Black Youth's Perspectives on Education Challenges and Policy". The focus group included 16 youth from various high-schools from across the island of Montreal. The goal of the research group was to "engage Black youth as researchers and scholars in exploring the question of how, and to what extent, schools and community organizations promote the academic engagement of Black students and increase graduation rates". Semaji spoke to Ms. Livingstone about her experiences regarding the project.

1. What surprised you about the students that were selected?

I suppose what most surprised me was that they far surpassed our expectations. I was really struck by the level of maturity of the young people. It was the first time I was working with adolescents and high school students and I think it's a very exciting time for them because they're developing their ideas about issues in the world. And they can be very creative and thought-provoking. I think that is what I will most take away from that experience, just how mature and insightful young people can be about contemporary social issues. Perhaps we don't harness that capacity enough in our schools and in our daily lives.

2. How did the groups from the schools differ, in terms of aspirations and general outlook?

To speak of a school in general is challenging because within a school you have a lot of diversity. I guess we had unique profiles of kids and chose them for that reason. We wanted English-speaking kids who are second-generation and English-speaking kids who may be first generation and attending English schools. We know that some of the kids that are most likely to drop out are Black English-speaking kids in French high schools as well as Creole-speaking kids in French high schools, so we were looking for that sort of representation. To hear their voices and see what can be done to enhance their success and their graduation. There were

French schools where there were predominantly kids of first generation who have French either as a first or as a second language.

Each school had a very diverse population which is characteristic of Montreal schools. One of the things that the kids told us was that adults may sometimes have a different view. They think that these differences can give rise to tension and prejudice but the kids told us that they enjoy having a multicultural school. Even though you might see groupings along ethnic or cultural lines, there's a lot of interaction. In terms of outlook, all of the groups talked about their experience as being minorities and racism, how they feel that the society is not open to them enough. Despite incredible progress, they still feel marginalized. Depending on the socio-economic background of kids and their immigration background some kids seem more positive, more hopeful [and] more confident they could overcome the obstacles than others.

3. Do you feel that Black youth are in a significantly worse situation that other visible minorities in regards to the education system?

Up to date the only research that has been on the success of visible minorities in Quebec schools is on Black youth. Based on the success of that study, (because it really provided detail and a complex profile of the situation) they've decided to look at other groups of kids: Latino youth, Middle-Eastern youth, South-Asian youth, etc. The data isn't available yet so it's really hard to say.

Accessing the data and putting it together means playing with the data, i.e., there's no identification with Black. So you have to think, who can I assume is Black based on nationality, etc. There are so many factors: socio-economic stratification, parents having difficulty dealing with the Quebec school system, the curriculum not being reflective of the kids [and] how teachers engage them. But marginality on the basis of race, ethnicity, language or culture definitely affects different groups of youth in terms of their success in school which reflects the dominant society, culture, etc. I don't think the problems of Black youth are unique...sometimes Black

kids may be more often the victims of racism. There's that study that was done on racial profiling recently, which seems to show that Black males are particularly the victims of racial profiling, so I think there are challenges that are particular to them.

4. Generally speaking, would you say that the students you worked with were hopeful about their futures?

Very much. They want to maintain hope in their future. They're still developing their identities, their knowledge of the world. Of course we were with kids who came forward to participate, so we didn't engage kids who were having problems at school, because we didn't have the capacity to do that, nor the time... Kids with greater difficulty would need more support. I can't speak for all kids but the ones we spoke with were incredibly dynamic, passionate about issues and wanting to create the best conditions for themselves, but they recognized that there are challenges. So yes, they are hopeful but also very conscious of the existing challenges and interested in having discussions about that ... what are our contemporary realities and [and] how do we respond, how do operate in the best way in these circumstances. These are discussions that we should have more with young people because they

are trying to understand their world and school doesn't give them an opportunity to do that - to explore and ask critical questions. They often said that they wanted classroom projects that gave them that opportunity to explore real life issues that are relevant to them, that build on their understanding of their lives and of the world.

5. How would you qualitatively describe your time with them?

Extraordinary. Fun, uplifting, moving, a gift. One of the reasons I did this project is that one issue that I wanted to work on was youth of colour and working on the Black Demographic Study I had a chance to do that. It reinforced for me the value of participatory research, the untapped capacity of youth [and] how we relate to youth. We should give them more room to be creative, to explore, to develop themselves in [the] school setting and outside. One of the reasons I did this is that the picture that is painted of Black youth is of being the problem, prone to failure, and we know that that's not true. So the purpose was to show just how intelligent, capable [and] engaged Black youth are in Montreal.

QBBE Summer Programming

by Nadine Collins

The Quebec Board of Black Educators is a not-for-profit community organization situated in the Cote-des-Neiges/Notre-Dame-de-Grace borough. The QBBE has been providing quality educational services to families across Montreal for over forty years. The QBBE continues to enrich the lives of families in the community through its programs: The Family Program, Da Costa-Hall and BANA Summer School and the Entrepreneurship Program for Youth.

BANA SUMMER SCHOOL

For this summer, the BANA Summer School program will be held from July 5 to August 5. The main goal of the program is to help students by developing their confidence, awareness, self-esteem and persistence in carrying out tasks. In this way we will help improve

the students' overall academic skills. The program provides activities designed to help enrich the social and cultural experiences of our students.

The BANA summer school curriculum consists of Mathematics, English Language Arts, French, Science, The History of Blacks, Arts and Crafts and Physical Education for cycle one, cycle two and cycle three elementary students. Regular classes will be held from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. daily. We have two locations to serve you: Coronation School located in Cote-Des-Neiges (4810 Van Horne) and St. Lawrence Academy Jr. located in LaSalle (8340 David-Boyer).

HIGH SCHOOL PREPARATION PROGRAM

In addition, the Da Costa-Hall Summer School will be holding a High School Preparation Program from

July 5 to August 6 located at Dawson College. Its primary objective is to provide graduating elementary students with the foundation to smoothly transition from the elementary school setting to the high school setting. The program includes academics, tutoring and workshops that will teach the students necessary skills to succeed in high-school.

DA COSTA-HALL SUMMER SCHOOL

For this summer, the Da Costa-Hall Summer School (Dawson College) program will be held from July 5 to August 6, 2010. The objectives of the program are: to help students who need to earn credits, to help students who need to improve their academic skills, to help students succeed in Supplemental Examinations and to provide students with enrichment studies.

The Da Costa-Hall summer school curriculum consists of courses in cycle one and cycle two of high-school. The curriculum includes for cycle one and cycle two, year one students, French, English Language Arts, Mathematics and the History of Blacks. Curriculum for cycle two, year two and three students includes French, English Language Arts, Mathematics (Cultural, Social & Technical option, Science option, Math 436 Bridge) History and Citizenship, Physical Science, Science and Technology and the History of Blacks.

HISTORY OF BLACKS

The History of Blacks course will begin July 5, 2010 and will end August 6, 2010. This program is intended to expose youth to the history of Blacks that is absent in mainstream history books. Students will learn

about Black Pioneers, leaders and communities that played a major role in Canadian history. This is a free course and is a positive way to supplement course studies in the summer. QBBE Summer School is possible through the support of the Ministry of Education, EMSB, and Dawson College.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP PROGRAM FOR YOUTH

This program will begin June 7, 2010 and will end August 20, 2010. It runs Monday to Thursday from 10 am - 2 pm. The objective of this summer program is to expose youth to alternative career possibilities in business. The participants will learn about responsible leadership, social interaction and communication, personal financial management and budgeting. They will review the characteristics of an entrepreneur, learn the necessary steps to set up and run their own business.

Also they will meet and interact with successful entrepreneurs.

The youth will attend interactive classes on entrepreneurial content instructed and facilitated by ICED, John Molson School of Business (Concordia University). They will also be involved in a series of personal financial workshops facilitated by Carrefour Jeunesse Emploi-CDN to help them understand their personal finances and to acquire skills to better manage their budgets. The Entrepreneurship Program is funded by Ville de Montreal and in collaboration with J.C.C.W.L., CJE-NDG & CJE-CDN



Bana and Da Costa-Hall Parent-Teacher interviews



Bana Students End of Summer School Performance

For more information on any of our programs and registration please contact the QBBE Tel: (514) 481-9400 or e-mail: qbbe@videotron.ca

Mini-Poste



by Nahida Chowdhury

Over the last several months Dawson Social Services student, Nahida Chowdhury, volunteered at BCRC as part of our Mini Poste program. The following is her account of her experiences with the program.

My experience with the Black community Resource Center was just amazing. From the beginning of my internship until the end, I felt as if I was part of a family. The staff members were so friendly and welcoming that in the beginning I didn't even feel like a new member of the team. Even though I was only going once a week for my stage, everyone accepted me and they were always ready to help with whatever I needed. I would have liked to go more than once a week because it was just incredible. The environment itself was very friendly, warmhearted where one would feel at ease in no time.

During the course of my stage at BCRC, I had a change of supervisor, however the change was

done smoothly and my new supervisor was just too marvelous to be around. Although Denise was my supervisor after Luigi left, Clara was always there to help me and encourage me with the workshops and activities we did. I was able to express myself and share my thoughts without hesitation.

Working with the kids was quite a pleasure. Each time I led the group at Mini-Poste, I was assured that both Denise and Clara would be there to help me out at any time. The kids at Mini-Poste were very respectful toward their superiors and clear in the understanding that I was with them in a learning capacity. Yet they had faith in what I was able to bring to their experience.

I got to learn so much from my superiors as well as from the kids; it was just lovely. This organization, especially the after-school program, Mini-Poste has given me the chance to rediscover myself as well as add experience to my learning. I would definitely recommend this organization to anyone interested to work with kids because I know they will love it and enjoy it as much as I did. We all have to start somewhere to get ahead in life and this beginning with BCRC was just the push I needed to begin my new journey. The memories I am leaving with are to be cherished forever for it was indeed a mind-blowing experience that I will keep with me till the end.

Summer Reading



1. Title: Assata
Author: Assata Shakar

This presents the life story of African-American revolutionary Shakur, previously known as JoAnne Chesimard.

2. Title: *Running Uphill*
Author: Fil Fraser

Running Uphill showcases Harry Jerome's race upon the treadmill of "race", where progress against racism is glacial, even for an Olympic sprinter. Fil Fraser explains this pernicious irony, this very Canadian paradox, in masterful, beautiful prose. His humour is a razor; his honesty is a guillotine. In Fraser's bio, heroic Jerome looms larger than life

and too fast for anyone to weigh him down with labels. - George Elliott Clarke.

3. Title: *How Blacks Created Canada* – **Author:** Fil Fraser

Across the country and throughout time, Blacks have played

pivotal roles in the unfolding of Canadian history. Woven into the fabric of the country itself, they have made serious contributions to this great nation.

4. Titled *Bob Kaufman*

Author: Cranial Guitar

CRANIAL GUITAR which collects poems that first appeared in *The Ancient Rain* and *Crowded with Loneliness*, and includes the entire text of the long-out-of-print *Golden*

Sardine, is the only major collection available of the late poet Bob Kaufman.

Kaufman was active (except during a decade long self-imposed silence) in the poetry scenes of San Francisco and New York from the 1950s to the 1980s, and has attained cult status for his place at the forefront of the Beat movement. "Kaufman is also known as one of America's true surrealist poets, a premier jazz poet, and a major poet

of the black consciousness movement. So much did he embody a French tradition of the poet as outsider, madman, and outcast, that in France, Kaufman was called the Black Rimbaud."--from the introduction by David Henderson.

Say It Loud!

by Jason Gondziola

After several months, the BCRC's project *Say it Loud, Say it Proud!*, is winding to a close. Over the last few months we worked with nearly 100 Montreal youth through our programs at James Lyng and Riverdale High Schools. Students learned the art and craft of video production through hands-on instruction using professional equipment graciously offered by our partners at Concordia University Television and Concordia's Centre for Oral History and Digital Storytelling.

Working with students as part of their school curriculum, the *Say it Loud, Say it Proud!* project produced two series of four videos, as well as a hip-hop history of Montreal's Little Burgundy community.

The first series of four videos, entitled *Islam in Montreal*, examines the growth and development of the Islamic community here in Montreal. Through interviews with Bashir Hussein, one of the first Muslims to arrive in Quebec, we learned about the challenges that faced Islamic migrants in Quebec, from 1963 onward.

The second series of four videos comprises a series of interviews of two local musicians. The first is Yassin Alsalman, aka the Narcicyst, an Iraqi-born Canadian who has been living in Montreal for a number of years. The second is Nantali Indongo, aka Iam-BlackGirl. Nantali is a musician with the award-winning Montreal hip-hop group *Nomadic Massive*. Nantali's parents hail from St. Vincent and Grenada, and she has spent most of her

life in Montreal. Both musicians were interviewed about their experiences living in Montreal as well as their careers as musicians.

The final video was produced with students from James Lyng, with support from *Writing Our Rhymes Down (WORD)*, a literacy through hip-hop program here in Montreal. In this project, youth were encouraged to study the history of Little Burgundy and to translate their new knowledge into a song and music video that covered everything from gentrification to the history of important local celebrities like Oscar Peterson. You can view the completed works at our website: www.sayitloudsayitproud.com

Pay It Forward

'Overture with the Arts' is a Montreal-based non-profit performing arts organization dedicated to providing performing arts education available to youth from all walks of life. The program's inception came about after a Montrealer, Akilah Newton, noticed a lack in arts programming for underprivileged and at-risk teens and decided to 'Pay It forward' by contributing to the community.

The story about this Montrealer's journey to start 'Overture with the Arts' is quite unique and begins here in Montreal. She has always been a participant in the performing arts and acted in several of John Abbott College school productions and was even a member of the Montreal Jubilation Gospel Choir. Additionally, she has worked in many internship roles behind the scenes including then Mix 96 and spent a summer working for agent to the stars, Barry Garber at his artist management company IMC. It was all of these experiences that led her to realize that her true calling was actually behind the scenes rather than in the spotlight.

It was the summer of 2003 when she decided to turn her love for

the entertainment industry into a career and embarked on a journey that would change her life. After hearing about a performing arts school in the UK, she applied and was accepted to the prestigious Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts (LIPA) which is a school co-founded by Sir Paul McCartney. She spent 2003-2006 absorbing information about working in the entertainment industry as a performer and behind the scenes and she dedicated all of her spare time working on student projects to gain even more experience.

Within the 3-years, she developed a great amount of respect for Sir Paul McCartney and his dedication to the students at LIPA. With the busy schedule of a legendary chart topping International recording artist, Sir Paul McCartney still found time to come to the school several times a year to give advice to students and to provide feedback to music students on their work. His dedication to 'Paying It Forward' to LIPA students and his hometown of Liverpool was inspiration to Akilah and gave her the push she needed to create 'Overture with the Arts'.

The 'Overture with the Arts' program provides students with the opportunity to work together to create a musical theatre production in a 7-week summer program and focuses on one of the following themes: Equality, anti-bullying and racism.

With guidance from their instructors, students will develop a script; choose 2-3 popular songs to perform as a chorus and choreograph routines to the chosen songs. All of these segments will be pieced together to form a 45 minute, end-of-the-summer musical theatre production.

For young fans of the show 'Glee' the 'Overture with the Arts' program will surely be a delight as it embraces people's differences and disadvantages and celebrates them by focusing on the advantages of a person's individuality.

For more information about 'Overture with the Arts' and their summer program or if you would like to make a donation, please visit: www.overturewiththearts.org or contact them at info@overturewiththearts.org

Expressin' Life by Zeeta Maharaj

It doesn't happen often. For some they may never be privy to it, but for those of us who have experienced it, we know that we are forever different – changed, enriched in a way many times too hard to describe, but a shared smile can unify

us. Who are we; what makes us so different, so unique, so enriched? We are, like many before us, and hopefully a legacy of people behind us, we have been privileged to work with a collective of energetic, inspiring and at times, challenging teenage

girls.

For the past 10 months I have been immersed in a world of intercoms, security cameras, uniforms and an undeniable sense of institution. Flashbacks of younger

days - I was also welcomed by familiar faces, warm smiles and energetic young bright-eyed girls with warm receptions when they saw me – I was back in high-school, not as a teacher, observer, guest speaker, but as an Expressin' Life Animator. Along with 3 other women dedicated to making a difference, we worked in 8 English Montreal School Board schools across the island. We worked alongside administrators, teachers, staff, SVPM contacts in an understanding and giving support system. All our interactions and our time with these emerging women we worked with made a difference.

I can sit here and type away about how much of a difference I made and how great it was to be in the position of a role-model and that I left a positive impact on these young women, but none of that matters. The reality is these young girls changed me. I have learnt resilience, dedication and I admire the amount of spirit and love they have. The types of struggles they face and their ability to carry on helped me continue. They were strong and they were loyal and their sense of friendships were impressive to say the least. The girls I worked with changed me, challenged me, stretched me and encouraged me to be a better me just by being transparent, just by being real, just by being them - our girls. My outlook on today's youth is different. It surprises me that within only one generation things have changed so much – life's pressures coupled with the expectations on these young girls shoulders can be overwhelming, and I am proud of their ability to keep shining.

In the time we got to know them, they uncovered a number of

passions, talents that were encouraged: budding singers, dancers, painters, fashion designers, writers, playwrights - each one creative, open and willing to dream. They changed me and motivated me to be the type of woman they looked up to. And when they came to some crossroad in their teenage lives and reflected that I was always on their side – they helped me support them unconditionally. I've never felt that before. At times it was daunting, scary, frustrating even – but I wouldn't trade this experience in for the world.



They showed me things, entertained me, taught me and introduced me to some of my own truths, lessons that I will undoubtedly reflect on.

I don't believe things happen by chance. I believe they happen for a reason. Meeting these young women, working with them, talking, mirroring myself, keeping it real, opening up and encouraging them to do the same happened because it needed to happen. We were Expressin' Life. Through the discussions and the time we spent creating the artwork we produced we learnt about each other's cultures, instilled patience, and also learned about life. Sharing, building, cultivating relationships showed these young ladies that there is a need for women to stay together as a pillar of strength. Understanding become part of this process. Helping

them see their worth, their creativity and their endless, limitless possibilities was truly a gift.

I am not the same, I don't look at youth the same way. The young ladies I have worked with for the past academic year have helped me see beyond my previous misconceptions. Working as an Expressin' Life animator has helped me see others for whom they are and what they have to offer. I have been able to see the queens that these young women will become. I am confident that they will be able to walk into their greatness and I am proud that in some way I was able to leave a positive, lasting impression on them, even in the smallest way. I know that they have helped shape, sculpt and impact my life for the better.

We started out as strangers, but we are leaving as sisters. My fellow animators have showed me dedication, creativity and abilities in multi tasking, facilitating and contributed to this project superbly. Also on a personal level they taught me and made me proud to stand with them as a co-worker, a co-facilitator, and collaborator in this amazing pilot project. I am proud not only of the accomplishments of the teenage girls we worked alongside, but eternally grateful for building, sharing, creating and learning from my fellow facilitators, support staff and project facilitator – I am better because I am blessed to have worked with you. You have helped guide me. I have learnt from you and I have found my voice in Expressin' Life.



TASTE OF THE CARIBBEAN 2010



Photos courtesy of the
“A Taste of the Caribbean”
Festival 2010, a BCRC partner.



Tim Horton's Camp

by Clara Ganemtoré

As part of the 2009-2010 Mini-Poste program, 6 supervisors, including Mini-Poste animators, and 35 students from the current and previous year, went away on a camping weekend from April 30 to May 02. We spent the weekend at Tim Horton's Travel Camp, located along the shores of Pontiac Bay, near Quyon, Quebec, about 2 hours away from Montreal. All expenses were paid through donations made to the Tim Horton's Children Foundation, one of the partners of the after-school anti-gang program. It was an opportunity for the kids to take part in fun outdoor activities, to be recognized for all their hard work in the program and to spend quality time away from the city.

A guide to surviving a three-day camping trip with thirty pre-adolescent students:

#1: Do not underestimate the power of an air-conditioned bus and prospects of a three day Timbits diet.

I had yet to see our students ALL arrive on time for activities, but for this camping trip they arrived EARLY, waiting for the animators with all the excitement their miniature selves could bottle up. Was it the call of the wild pulling them?

MAYBE NOT!

"Madame, madame, are we going there in a luxury bus? When my sister went to camp, she went in a luxury bus. Will there be air conditioning? Can we watch movies on the bus? Are we eating donuts for lunch and dinner?"

Now I wonder how they will manage sleeping in a tent in the woods!!!!

#2: Are we there yet?

The pertinence of that movie dawns upon me during our near 3 hours ride to Quyon, Quebec.

#3: Amazing accommodations

Never mind sleeping in a tent in the woods. We were housed in a chalet fully equipped with bunk-beds, showers with hot water, a fireplace and found the controls

to the heating and cooling system in the chalet after freezing our... the first night. We did not have to rough it out with Mother Nature and the animators and students snored the night away in their warm blankets.

The geese-droppings and mosquitoes gave us a warm welcome at the break of dawn however. But once we rubbed the sleep from our eyes and completed the morning ritual of yawns and stretches we were blown away by where we were. The landscape was breathtaking. The gentle green of the grass tickled our feet hello, blooming plants and flowers everywhere welcomed us outside and the glistening water bank begged our eyes to open wider and appreciate the beauty before us.

#4: What a fire-alarm can do for team-building and discipline?

The only unfortunate incident was a fire-alarm on the first night. The fire-alarm went off when we lit a chimney fire in our cabin; the chimney was not uncovered, the reason why the alarm went off. No one was hurt. The Tim Horton camp animators had already given us instructions on what to do if a fire alarm went off. The incident did help to make the students take instructions more seriously as one of the camp animators made them take 5 minutes of silence repeatedly until there was complete silence.

For a group of lovable, yet naturally unruly kids, this was quite a feat. All 30 students had to reflect on their behaviour and how they could be more respectful towards the animators of BCRC and the Tim Horton Camp for the duration of their stay. Those who could not hold in their laughter and did not understand how their behaviour reflected on the larger group were made to reflect some more during a 7 a.m. jog on the sand dunes.

#5: Balance and agility is all you need

The scenery, comfy beds and early morning jogs did not compare to the adventures and games we enjoyed. On day one we mastered archery, went on a map quest and used digital cameras to capture the fun we were having. On day two it was off to low rope and swing challenges, climbing walls and challenge courses, more pictures on camera and a camp-fire to end the day. We roasted marshmallows, of course and heard a few stories about a particular grandmother who hates Coffee but loves Tea ☐!

On day three we woke up to another nature walk where the students learned to build a shelter out of twigs. Many of them were also surprised to learn that they could do without water for three days and no food for three weeks.

If you ever get lost in the wilderness our students can be counted on to get you out alive or at least provide survival skills until rescue arrives!

#6: You may not get closer to nature, but you will learn to appreciate each other so much more.

The final day was a bitter-sweet one. We had lots of fun and the students were sad to leave. Seeing their tired faces on the bus ride back to Montreal, we knew that our camping trip was a great success. They are already asking to go back this summer for a week. What we had all gained during camp went beyond the fun we had. In between the constant warnings to go back to bed, the nagging to keep

rooms tidy, the encouragement to keep climbing higher and higher on the climbing wall, we got closer to our students in a way we could not in school. We learned that one of the least outspoken students can use words like succulent to describe the food he ate in a thank-you letter to the sponsors of the camp. We were surprised that one of the toughest acting students slept with a pillow tight in his arms, a finger up a nostril and mouth wide open. We laughed with them and challenged ourselves as one. I have new found respect for their endurance, kindness, creativity, intelligence, and care for one another. I was touched by their appreciation for the work we do for them and was reminded that they were like any other ten to fourteen year-old kids who just want to get out there to learn and still have fun. That is exactly what we did during the trip.



Miles Davis Exhibit

by Jason Selman

When I first heard about the Miles Davis exhibit (while still in its Paris incarnation) I became very excited, hoping that one day soon the exhibit would come to Montreal. When informed that the exhibit was indeed coming here I quite obviously became even more excited. I took it upon myself to see the exhibit last week, and for many reasons, my expectations were quite high. I was neither overwhelmed nor disappointed but I am quite happy I went and I will be going back, perhaps more than once.

The beauty of Miles for me has always been as much about his music as his duality - a person with the capacity to make music so touching and vulnerable in one instance and brutish and cold in the next, able to transcend gender through his music but yet ironically trapped by his own masculinity and misogyny in his daily life and public persona. This is the Miles that I have come to know and have tried to understand. This is the Miles I was looking for when I made my way to the Musée des Beaux Arts one sunny afternoon.

Perhaps because my knowledge of Miles is more than elementary I expected a lot from the exhibit, something as deep, challenging and complex as Miles himself: emotional but also at the vanguard, a place that Miles continually reached for, something just a little in front of the curve. So upon entering the calm and serene labyrinth that the exhibit turned out to be, I quickly realized that things were not going to be exactly as I was expecting.

The first clue was the how quickly the exhibit seemed to pass from one time period to another. One minute I was in the mid 40's and the next thrust into the prime of Miles's

career (albeit perhaps the first of many "primes" in his prolific output). Things seemed to move so fast, I felt like I was being rushed through the Rockies when I would much rather drive, if not walk. Fortunately as time passed and as I made my way deeper into the exhibit and further into the breadth of Mr. Davis' musical legacy, things became more and more intriguing. Once I got past the periods of his life that I was familiar with and into the later years, the more interested I became. I also realized that there were



things I had obviously overlooked, such as albums I had avoided out of fear of disappointment that I now clearly knew that I had to re-examine. I came to recognize that there was more - much more - more that I could discover, perhaps even a Miles I knew nothing about.

When I first heard the records from Miles' second great quintet (also at a time when I felt like I had seen, if not heard it all) I was blown away. I had never heard a band play that way, with such telepathic ferocity or such power and agility. I was used to his more cinematic and lyrical, romantic output from the 50's. His 60's work with Herbie Hancock, Ron Carter, Wayne Shorter and Tony Williams was a completely different world. For

the first of many times I had discovered a Miles I knew nothing about.

Such revelations had visit me several times over the years and thankfully after seeing the Miles exhibit at the Musée des Beaux Arts I realized I was on the cusp of another revelation.

I left the exhibit content and yet melancholy because I realized that we may never see another career nor a character as equally, complex, prolific, controversial, talented and precursory as Miles Dewey Davis III. What has always impressed me the most about Miles was his ability to be at the very forefront of jazz and be on the ground floor, if not spearheading the next movement. From being integral to the creation of Cool Jazz, Modal Jazz and Fusion to being there at Bebop's inception and helping to mold its transformation into Hard Bop, he not only could see the future of Jazz. Much like Ellington, Miles also had the skill and the vision to create it. And after repeatedly changing the world of Jazz forever he had the nerve not look back.

After spending the day with Miles what I treasured the most of all was having had the privilege in some way to be with and spend time with him. For though I wished the complexity of who he was as a man had been somehow mirrored, if not addressed by the exhibit, perhaps that was too much to ask if not the task of some other exhibit. Maybe it was to be the objective of some completely different exhibit. What was more important, as well as more gratifying, was the opportunity to be surrounded by the artifacts, music and the essence of a man, who despite all of personal shortcomings was one the last century's most significant, brilliant, beloved artists. I will visit him again and I will most definitely enjoy every moment of discovery.

Jeunesse 2000

by Jason Selman

On May 5, 2010, Jeunesse 2000 (J2K), a very popular and much needed youth drop-in centre in NDG was informed by the City of Montreal that their facilities would be closed as part as of its plan for the closure of the entire NDG Recreation Centre, of which J2K is a part. By taking vigorous and immediate action including a petition and the engagement of the youth who frequent the Centre, Jeunesse 2000's staff and supporters were able to shave the Centre from closure. Semaji spoke to the J2K's director Neil Guilding, aka Zibz (an active poet and musician on the Montreal scene for many years) about the ordeal and the importance of the Centre to the community.

1. In your own words, how would you describe the present situation at J2K?

Presently the program is still running, the mood has changed. [Upon hearing the news that the centre might close] the mood was my gosh, they can't close the program down. So what ensued was we started mobilizing. We created a petition. We started talking to the youths. We made a video testimony about their feelings about the situation...And on the 26th of May we presented our grievance, spoke about how we need these programs and how they are built for the betterment of society and for the youth. The building was built specifically for that reason, something that we pulled off of the city's website and we used that as a defense. It goes against their mandate, trying to close these centers. The Benny Project is under construction but nowhere [else] can fit everybody and we don't think

it makes sense to centralize all the services because you know what's gonna happen, a lot of people will be cut off, some will not be welcomed.

We create a service that welcomes youth in their own distinct self. As a youth growing up here (I came here in my teens) you realize that there are certain places where you are not welcome. It's not necessarily said but you just don't feel welcome. Now the vibe is that we're not moving. Some youth ask "are we gonna close down" and we say no, let's find a way to make these programs run to keep the building open. We should be encouraging more social activity, places where the youth can go in their different areas so they can keep busy and keep active.

2. What makes J2K unique in terms of a drop-in centre for youth in NDG?

One the facts [that makes us unique] is that we're connected to Head and Hand and they have their multi-faceted services, whether they are social, legal, street work. We have a medical clinic, we have the sex [education] program, etc. We are under the umbrella of these resources in our organization alone. And I think because of our non-judgmental approach it creates a confident space; we're not zero tolerance. We meet people and try to work through these differences instead of judging people. Obviously we have rules but by our philosophy alone we are unique...we're open. We're open to difference; we celebrate difference. We don't see difference as a clutch, but as an asset, questioning the social ills of the society. We started Project X, with [regard to] racial profiling and we don't have a choice in that aspect because it reflects our experience. It

reflects my experience living here as a Black person, as a young man coming from the Caribbean trying to find a space in this immigration after separation, trying to make amends with colonization.

3. What makes your job as Director of the Centre fulfilling?

To be able to share my experience and also to learn from the youth specifically. I really feel inspired and I've seen improvements and I've learned so much from being in this position of affecting change, putting in programming that is valid. It's time for the voiceless to speak because there's another way of doing things. We haven't figured it out yet but at the same time we know that the way things have been going needs to be questioned. Now I'm in a position where I can be questioned but also question things and effect certain change.

4. How would you describe the need for this type of centre in this neighbourhood?

The schools are really failing a lot of our youth and I can see despair setting in. If the youth don't have anyone to bounce things off of, whether it's their parents, or older brothers, I think there's gonna be an explosion. There must outlets where these youth can let off some steam or talk to somebody or someone can guide them. We are not saying that we're here to take over for the parents or do the parents' job but we know "it takes a village to raise a child". There is no place for the youth to go.

We're social beings. We need to socialize and we need to be in places where socialization is the norm. In

school you have to be quiet in your place and you can't be a certain way, which is valid, but at the same time they're there to learn certain things and they're not learning certain things because of the bias of the curriculum. The overall plan for certain youth.

I'm just talking about what I see, these youth being disenfranchised

by the curriculum and this whole approach that they use to teach these youths. We're here. At least we're here advocating for some kind of change and can point them in a better direction to get help or needed resources. We serve as big brothers and big sisters because when they come here they can see themselves reflected. And in turn they can say when I

grow up I can do something like this and help. So that becomes the norm, that this is what you do: you help your community, you give what you have, you offer what you have.



The Black Community Resource Centre (BCRC) is an organization that strengthens community capacity by providing professional support to organizations and individuals in need.

Our team is committed to assisting visible minority youth rekindle their dreams and achieve their full potential.

Our Funders:

- **Human Resource and Skills Development Canada; Multiculturalism, Official Languages Branch; Ministry of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, National Crime Prevention Centre**
- **Emploi-Québec; Fonds Jeunesse du Québec; Ministère des Relations avec les citoyens et de l'immigration; Ministère de l'Emploi de la Solidarité Sociale et de la Famille**