

Jane Finch Action Against Poverty



Open Letter to York University

May 18, 2012

It was with real revulsion that we noticed, on newspaper stands, the editorial that appeared in the last edition of “Excalibur” by Michael Sholars, the paper’s Editor-In-Chief, which contained misinformation and prejudicial stereotype of our community. We were a large number of Jane-Finch community activists including youths, members of Nomansland and members of JFAAP, who attended a public forum on *Community Engagement as Social Action* hosted by The York University Faculty Association on April 20, 2012 at York University.

In his statement, Scholar states, “I don’t care what statistics are brought up to argue that the York campus is just as safe as any other city; the problems are coming from the area immediately surrounding our campus, one of the most infamous high-crime areas in the country.”

We all know which “surrounding” area he is referring to. This is the same community that York University and a number of groups within York have claimed to be working collaboratively with. Blaming the neighbouring Jane and Finch and Black Creek communities for sexual assaults and other forms of violence that have happened on the York University campus is inaccurate, outrageous and prejudicial. This closed minded attitude demonstrates the worst example of journalistic and academic excellence.

You and Mr. Scholar know that sexual assault, dating and domestic violence, and stalking as well as racism are serious problems on college and university campuses that have not been fully addressed. These acts of violence have historically been generated out of the chauvinistic and misogynistic cultures still dominating many universities and the society at large. Only when York and all levels of government start to take responsibility for this will there be some progress in addressing the problem. Doing so will lead to a safer campus and community.

The Jane and Finch Community has been struggling fervently for social and economic justice through addressing systemic issues facing the community, including a very high rate of unemployment and underemployment; racialization of poverty, targeted policing and the criminalization of youth among others; all of these are the worst forms of systemic violence that need to be addressed and eliminated in order to create a much healthier community.

You and Mr. Scholar know that many York and Seneca @ York students come from Jane and Finch. We are the diverse community that safely houses thousands of your students each year. York staff and its students have been given access to Jane and Finch community regularly for

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their academic pursuits (i.e. student work experience, research, meeting spaces, funding, etc.). However with all the public funding and community support that the University receives, our neighbourhood gets a very few benefits, so some respect would be nice.

This student funded newspaper should be serving a higher purpose, not spreading ignorance and hatred. The editorial was completely blind to the vibrancy and values of our community and ignores the links that we and organizations within York are trying to forge with.

Therefore, JFAAP demands:

- **A formal apology from *Excalibur's* Editorial Board**
- **A formal apology from York University.**
- **The inclusion of an op-ed on this subject in the next of *Excalibur* written by JFAAP addressing this issue and rejecting these prejudices.**

We believe that this could serve to start a dialogue based on respect and not the prejudices that *Excalibur's* Editorial has promulgated.

We look forward to hearing from you as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

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CC to: York University's Board of Governors; Community Affairs Committee; York University Faculty Association; CUPE 3903, York TD Community Engagement Centre, York University allies and Black Creek area community organizations and grassroots groups; *Excalibur's* Editorial Board and readers