

LEADERS REFLECT ON TROUBLING VIOLENCE

This summer there were many reasons for the community to be proud. Young performers from the pass the torch program represented the diversity of Malvern for the city at the Caribbean Carnival formerly called Caribana, students from the Youth Xpress program showcased their artwork on TTC busses in Toronto, and we celebrated Indigenous culture at the Malvern Public Library with Planet Indigenous. The community was also shocked by several unexpected acts of violence, which led to the loss of young, and valued members of the community. MY ROOTS took this opportunity to speak to some of our young community leaders about their feelings surrounding these events, and what could be done to prevent future violence.



Following the shooting in Danzig I felt really shaken up and deeply saddened by the loss of two innocent young people, and the aftermath of uncertainty that it has left for many. Scarborough has been my home, and the place I've gone to school, and worked, for most of my life. It was hard to take in something like this happening.

I think that the city has to invest in more sustainable programming that engages young people - particularly in areas identified as high risk due to populations that are more vulnerable. Band-aid solutions of funding for programming that is short-term and only initiated as a reaction to violence does not work. Being proactive by building strong communities should be the focus.

It's really important for everyone to feel invested in the safety of their community by being aware of whether politicians are neglecting or addressing issues in our community. They need to be held accountable for investing in the health of their constituencies whether that's through programming for youth, the development of infrastructure, or anything else identified as a need in the community. -**Nivethika Thambithurai**

Knowing and speaking to some of the individuals involved in the shooting I can safely say that if it wasn't Danzig than it would have happened somewhere else in the city.

Danzig's unfortunate misfortune came as the result of poor planning, lax policing, and some young people who had access to some firearms that makes me a bit worried to leave my home some mornings.

Nevertheless going into the community and speaking to people affected by the shooting you get an understanding that this is just like another neighbourhood less the social housing component.

Put simply, I'm not sure that this could have been avoided or even will be going forward.

Toronto and its polarities, teachers, preachers, social service sector, public and private and everyone in-between have something to say. I want to own my piece of the puzzle. This ownership piece is so hard to move past. No one wants to take responsibility and to leave it on the shoulders of young people would be a huge mistake.

These sections of society have to step up too. Call a child bad for long enough and one day they might surprise you and show you how bad they really are and how marginalized they have become. I'm going to be doing my small share and be on watch duty. -**Kwesi Johnson**



Joshua Yasay, one of the victims of the shooting that took place in Danzig, attended elementary school with my younger sister. Although I did not know him personally, I was connected to him through his older sister, Janelle, a friend at the same public school. Learning about his death was an immense shock and quickly became too close to home and real for me.

After his death, I connected with both of his older sister's to give my condolences and share my devastation about this tragedy. Attempting to make sense and find closure of such a tremendous loss to Joshua's family and the community, I attended his funeral, which was a graceful yet extremely emotional event. I was overcome with such grief and cried uncontrollably the entire time.

Although I had no connection to Shyanne Charles, the other victim of the shooting, I share my sincerest love and prayers to the families, friends and those that like myself, who are not directly connected, but still impacted by these senseless shootings.

As I reflect about the stigma associated with the east end of Toronto, I often wonder what we, as a community, can do to improve the well-being and quality of life of those that have and continue to be affected by issues related to violence, crime and unfortunately, death.



I am aware that there are many complex and interrelated issues that shape the realities of those living in different neighbourhoods, and therefore, more than one strategy, program, service etc. needs to be implemented to improve the various circumstances at hand. -**Miriam Aslam**

OUTSTANDING STUDENT OF THE SEASON

Hilori Kaloti
Community Reporter

"It is not all up to one person to change the world, but it is up to everyone to help out". – Jaelyn Neequaye

Jaelyn Neequaye is unlike many other kids of his age. Only in grade eight at St. Bede Catholic School, Neequaye has managed to become a leader in his school community, a role model for younger students and an advocate of schoolyard justice where he frequently stands up for students who have been bullied, marginalized or treated unfairly.

Neequaye has been an active member of the School Action Team where students and teachers come together to help identify school issues and work together on solving them. Neequaye says he joined the School Action Team because "I've seen my church donate to food banks and I participate in food drives. I joined because I love helping other students and I wanted to join to be a good influence to younger students."

In the fall of 2011, Neequaye and some of his peers attended "We Day" at the Air Canada Centre where youth from across North American come together to celebrate the positive actions they are taking in their communities and continue to build the momentum of the youth movement. Neequaye described his participation at "We Day" as a moving experience where he listened to guest speakers such as Shawn Desman and Premier Dalton McGuinty. Neequaye shared some of his learnings from this experience as "it is not all up to one person to change the world, but it is up to everyone to help out".

Neequaye was nominated for MY ROOTS Outstanding Student of the Season by his Principal, Peter Fitzpatrick. Principal Fitzpatrick shared a story of the way Neequaye was attempting to make changes in his school by acting as a change maker for himself and for his fellow peers. Fitzpatrick described Neequaye's personal willingness to take responsibility for his actions and make a change for the better that marked the beginning of the change he saw in him. For instance, Neequaye approached Principal Fitzpatrick one day regarding methods for organizing school pizza lunches. Neequaye indicated that it would be more environmentally friendly if the school would send home one order form for the entire school year, rather



»»» JAELYN NEEQUAYE

than forms sent home each month. "I sensed a genuine interest and gentle passion developing, and was moved by the sentiment from him [Neequaye]," said Fitzpatrick. Neequaye also received praise from his former teacher Collette Tobin-Byrne where she described Neequaye as an advocate for other children who are having difficulties at school or in the playground and she says Neequaye has developed a sense of awareness about himself, while witnessing him grow tremendously. Tobin-Byrne describes one of her proudest moments with Neequaye was when he spoke up in class to a fellow peer to say that "I am smart, I just learn differently". Tobin-Byrne also shares some of her early memories of Neequaye when he first came to her grade seven class, "I noticed he started turning things around. He kept himself organized with an agenda and he was so kind and empathetic towards his classmates. For example, if someone was being bothered in the yard, Neequaye is the one who goes and defends that student."

When asked about what he would like to be when he grows up, Neequaye says "my grandpa was a mechanic so I liked watching him fix

things like furnaces and wires. I like to build things and fix things...so something like that". Next year, Neequaye will begin high school and he says he wants to join all the teams he can, including track and field, basketball and soccer. "I want to get a good education and try to get a scholarship for a sport for the future", he says.

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

Do you know an outstanding young person that deserves to be recognized for their leadership, perseverance, commitment to a cause, or showcased for an outstanding talent?

Please send your nominations to malvern.youth.roots@gmail.com



MALVERN ALUMNI: STEFAN BARRANS

Devin Persaud
Community Reporter

Born and raised in Scarborough, Stefan Barrans has been a "Scarborough kid" since he was born and has even worked within his community since then. After landing a job as an occasional teacher in Scarborough, it was there Stefan found his interest in the education system. His first job was teaching elementary school at St. Albert's Catholic School. Ever since then, he has been integrated into the education system within Scarborough, and is currently a Vice Principal at Blessed Cardinal Newman.

Speaking with Stefan has brought to light his great attachment to Scarborough. His commitment and devotion to the community is remarkable in the work that he has done. Stefan expressed great interest in the ethnic diversity of Scarborough and how much he appreciated what he has learned growing up here. He exemplifies what it means to give back to your community.

Q: What was your experience like living in Scarborough?

A: Good, I've always liked Scarborough. There have always been misconceptions. I know that area well. I know the streets, the stores. I've always felt comfortable. In Scarborough, I've come to learn about a lot of the programs for youth. When people are not from Scarborough, and talk bad about Scarborough, I always defend it. I even have the flag of Scarborough before the amalgamation sitting in my office. I always quiz the kids on it. I'm actually looking at it as we speak.

My friends, which I've always known from high school or elementary school, they have lived in Scarborough for 10-15 years. We were always Scarborough kids. We always found new coffee shops. A new place to hang out. A new place to eat.

Q: What inspired you to get involved in the education system?

A: I was in university and I got a substitute teacher position, well occasional now is the name, I really liked it, and then I decided to go into teaching.

Q: Did you face any adversity?

A: Not really. My family was very open. And therefore, I was always surrounded by positive support. My friends are all from different ethnicities and backgrounds. Whenever I felt bad, I always knew it was going to be okay. My family was very supportive. Me and my brother, my family always supported our dreams. If you look at pictures of my friends, it's very multicultural. A positive thing, when I went to U of T Scarborough, there were 10-15 of us in the program, everyone was from a different cultural group, but we were this dynamic group and I remember these great discussions on politics, religion. And even when you're in Scarborough, different parts, there are very multicultural pockets. It has helped me now because when I talk to students now, it helps me deal with different situations and I try to bring that in.



»»» STEFFAN BARRANS

Q: What made you feel attached to Scarborough?

A: When you're born and raised here, I don't know if you know any better. It's your home. From skating at MidScarborough, hanging out at STC, playing soccer at west Rouge, the Bluffs. Everything was just, you didn't have to leave Scarborough, it was all here. I guess, that's why it was home. I was comfortable with it. This is home.

Q: What would you like to see changed in your community?

A: I would like to say education. Acceptance and understanding of, well, because it's so multicultural and so diverse, unfortunately people are not fully aware of who their neighbour is. It is important to educate people and educating yourself, you have opportunities of seeing the good in a lot of different people. When you're working with people in your community and living with them. It's not necessarily tolerance, it's more about acceptance and knowledge.

Q: What can we expect to see in the future for Stefan Barrans?

A: Other than being rich and famous or on the cover of a magazine. Continue to pursue with my personal education. I am in administration but I would like to be a principle of a school. My own growth with education. Hopes and dreams. Not planning on going anywhere. Just to continue to giving back to the community.

Q: In one word, how would you describe Malvern?

A: Diverse.

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

Do you know someone who lived or lives in Malvern that should be showcased as a role model?

Please send your nominations to malvern.youth.roots@gmail.com



LAGOS TO SCARBOROUGH, DISCOVERING MUSIC THROUGH PHASE 2

Written by: Shasha Aleesh and edited by Jen Fabico
Community Submission

Please permit me to travel back in time, at least ten years back in my young life. I was just eight years old when I got involved in an accident. I accidentally met music.

Growing up in Lagos, Nigeria, I lived in an extended and musically-inclined family setting which comprised of my doting mum, my loving younger sister and many other close relatives. I was born into a family where music was passed from one generation to another, which is enough evidence to conclude its dominance in my genotypic which resulted into Dice Ailes.

Not too long after my first ever composed verse, it suddenly became a part of me to want to exhibit the art of laying one's voice to an instrument with the purpose of reaching the souls of an audience. I had suddenly reached a point of no return in my love for music, her mystifying nature and the friendship that I had developed with her at that time. There were times when I felt moments of doubt, financial handicap, discouragement and discomfort. Nevertheless, there was always a determination to accomplish my aspirations through my alter ego, Dice Ailes. At age 15 and fresh out of high school in Nigeria, it was destiny's decision that I officially embarked on the journey to living my dreams. In just a few miles gone into the trip, I realized that I could listen to myself on the radio. At about the same time, it also came to pass that I would be moving to Canada to live and further my education. An iota of its possibility never occurred to me that I was going to be recognized as a Phase 2 artist. It wasn't in the original blueprint.

On May 5th 2011, I found an email from my immensely supportive father regarding Phase 2. I applied but took it less seriously at first since I was still in Nigeria. However, soon enough I received an acknowledgement from Youth Coordinator, Jen Fabico, welcoming me to an interview. Fortunately, I was on my way to Canada right before my interview. As my expectations salivated on a side, I was worried with thoughts of ways to impress the unknown judging panel. And after the interview, it was destiny's decision again that I was shortlisted as one of the selected emerging artists in the Phase 2 Project.

Being a part of Phase 2 Collective has created a big opportunity for my personal and professional growth as well as an opportunity to work jointly with other talented and skillful artists in the Collective such as Scott Ramirez, Emcee Poetry, Swazz, Epic, Aaron Ridge, Despa, Talent, Ed Wordz, Myster E and June Ballentyne. Phase 2 has also made it possible for me to

meet and mingle with renowned industry professionals such as hip hop veteran Dan-e-o, J Cole's Publicist Tara Muldoon, and profound hip hop artist Mario 'The Real Voyce' Murray from Beatz 2 Da Streetz.

Throughout the course of the Phase 2 project, we participated in song writing workshops with hip hop veteran Dan-e-o, marketing and promotion workshops with Tara Muldoon and recorded at the prodigious Phase One Studios where legends like Michael Jackson, Drake, the Black Eyed Peas and many more have mixed, mastered and recorded. Being a part of the Collective also meant that all of the participating emerging artists had the networks and opportunities to perform live. This summer, the Phase 2 Collective performed at Urban Arts' Culture Shock, Agincourt Youth Cabinet's ABC, and Scarborough's Subtext Festival. These events opened doors to share the stage with well-known faces such as Mario 'The Real Voyce' Murray, Michie Mee, Cabbie Richards and Maestro Fresh Wes.

As September approached, we wrapped up the Phase 2 Project with an EP entitled Devastating, which debuted at the Subtext Multi-Arts Festival held annually under the Lawrence Avenue Bridge. The Phase 2 Collective has created a big family environment for me away from my own biological family. The Phase 2 project gave me a space, mentors and other like-minded hip hop artists with whom I can work. Still on my journey, I have received an opportunity to work with Dan-e-o on his forthcoming album while working on the release of my own mix tape entitled.

Download the Phase 2 album for free at www.scarborougharts.bandcamp.com or visit www.scarborougharts.com to check out their other free programs and events.

»»» CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

He further continued, "the Malvern community consists of many unknown talented artists, in which this program serves as a platform that allows them to realize what they're good at and express it to serve a cause." He has worked on several projects at MFRC such as graffiti, portrait, and spray paint art.

The program also allows students to spend their time focusing on positive things and away from the inevitable negative aspects of our society. After questioning Joshua James, another member of Youth X press, on why he joined the program in the first place, he replied, "it keeps me out of trouble." Developing social programs, such as these, keep youth involved in the

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ARE YOU LOOKING TO SHARE YOUR PERSONAL EXPERIENCES OR OPINIONS?

HAVE YOU WRITTEN A SHORT STORY YOU WANT TO SHARE?

HAVE YOU TAKEN NOTICE OF AN ISSUE IN THE COMMUNITY AND WANT TO SHARE YOUR IDEAS FOR A SOLUTION?

IF YOU ANSWERED YES TO ANY OF THESE QUESTIONS, CONSIDER BECOMMING A WRITER FOR MY ROOTS.

EMAIL YOUR IDEAS TO:

MALVERN.YOUTH.ROOTS@GMAIL.COM

ALL WRITERS WILL RECEIVE AN HONORARIUM FOR VOLUNTEERING.



community, which benefits them and Malvern as a whole.

Residents of Malvern should be on the look-out for the creative mural of this program that will serve as a mobile gallery in Toronto. Their mural was also showcased at the "BIG, BAM, BOOM" Youth Art Festival this past summer that is hosted yearly by the AFCY at the Harbourfront Centre in Toronto. The MFRC and these students strive to promote a community free of drugs through many positive social initiatives within our community.

For more information on Youth X press visit <http://www.afcy.ca>

MY ROOTS WRITING CONTEST FOR CASH PRIZE!!!

Have you seen a problem in the community? Something you just wish would be different or change for the better? Do you have an idea for a big or small solution for this problem? Send us your ideas today! Contest deadline is **JANUARY 31st, 2012.**

Find out more at www.my-roots.ca.

Age 19-21 - 2000 words
Age 14-18 - 1000 words
Age 13 and under - 500 words



Please send all submissions to malvern.youth.roots@gmail.com with your name, age, title of submission and, the name of the school you currently attend.

RULES: 1. Three prizes will be awarded for each age category and up to \$100 dollars can be awarded to one contestant. 2. The contestant must show proof of their age upon request. 3. The answer to the question can be in any style of writing, but must be written by the contestant. 4. All entries must be attached to an email and include a title for the submission. 5. Winners will be announced in late February and published in the next edition of MY

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Action for Neighbourhood Change
BUILDING STRONG NEIGHBOURHOODS TOGETHER
Malvern



KEEPING OUR STREETS SAFE AND OUR COMMUNITY VIBRANT

WHAT'S INSIDE?

REFLECTIONS ON VIOLENCE IN THE COMMUNITY FROM YOUNG LEADERS

THE S.P.O.T. INITIATIVE

A STORY OF DISCOVERY AND MUSICAL GROWTH AT PHASE 2

CLEANING UP THE COMMUNITY ON EARTH DAY

OUTSTANDING STUDENT: JAELYN NEEQUAYE

MALVERN ALUMNI: STEFAN BARRENS

YOUTH X PRESS PROGRAM

"Band-aid solutions of funding for programming that is short-term and only initiated as a reaction to violence does not work." - Nivethika Thambithurai

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ONLINE!



FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

2012 has revealed many highs and lows for the community of Malvern and the greater Scarborough area. On page 6 we showcase a dialogue that references the startling violence that took place too close to home and stole two young lives. On behalf of the entire MY ROOTS team I convey our condolences to the family of Joshua Yasay and Shyanne Charles. The reflections shared by community leaders on page 6 remind us that we all need to become a part of the solution and prevent senseless violence from taking place in our community.

We cannot allow these acts to define our community and remember that there were many people, events, and milestones that we should celebrate and take pride in.

For example, our outstanding student, Jaelyn Neequaye reminds us that we all need to show empathy toward one another.

Also pay close attention to page 8 of this edition as we have shared an opportunity for all young people in our community to identify problems and seek out solutions, however big or small. We want to hear about your solutions to issues our community is facing and we feel that you should not only have the platform to share those solutions, but the support to create them.

Remember to visit our website for more information about this writing contest and other opportunities with MY ROOTS. Until next time, happy reading,

Laxmi Parthasarathy

YOUTH X PRESS: MURALS WITH A MESSAGE

Nitin Basandra
Community Submission

Getting involved in the community gives young students the opportunity to channel both their talents and concerns on various issues affecting society. The Malvern Family Resource Center (MFRC) offers a wide range of opportunities for students to get involved as well as express their interests through the diverse programs available. "The programs offered at the MFRC give us students a great opportunity to volunteer, to help others, as well as gain leadership and communication skills," explained Ragulan Kumarasalan, a grade ten student of Lester B. Pearson Collegiate Institute and a member of the Malvern Youth Cabinet at MFRC.

A program offered at the MFRC has caught the attention of many students in the Malvern community. "Youth X Press" is an 8-12 week program comprised of 14-19 year old students who focus on raising awareness of various issues in the community. "The purpose of our program is to engage students in extra-curricular activities that allow them to showcase talent as well as raise awareness for important issues such as drug prevention. They can enjoy what they love doing as well as make a difference while doing it," said site supervisor, Denise Wilson. The program uses the artistic talent of students who come together on a weekly basis at the MFRC and work on murals that will be posted on the side TTC buses this fall. It gives youth an opportunity to voice

out their concerns against drug use in the Malvern community through visual messaging.

In the past, the program has also allowed students to express their talent through many activities such as graffiti art, African drumming, and various drama and cooking programs. These programs are chosen seasonally in an effort to find a balance between different areas of art that can help encourage diversity within the community. They are supported by the Arts For Children and Youth (AFCY) organization who provide a facilitator and resources to ensure the success of the program.

Joshua Somra, a grade twelve student at Lester B. Pearson, has been an active member of various programs at MFRC for over three years after MFRC members first approached him at his school. "My time at MFRC and especially the Youth X press program has taught me many things I did not know I was so good at, such as drawing faces, graffiti and lettering." When asked what he hoped the mural he was working on would achieve, he responded, "to use images to get the message across that people should stay away from drugs."

Michael Reyes, facilitator for the Youth X press program, has also facilitated other programs at the MFRC since 2009. "After being approached by AFCY to facilitate this program, it was easy for me to accept since I could easily relate to youth in a community where I grew up in."

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THE SPOT INITIATIVE: LOOKING FOR VOLUNTEER SUPPORT

Erica Lenti

Community Submission

Get ready, kids – the Success Opportunity Teamwork Initiative (S.P.O.T.) has launched, and is creating a community arts space designed specifically for Malvern youth.

S.P.O.T., which celebrated its official groundbreaking in early August 2011, is a non-profit youth-led initiative that provides a safe and creative space for Malvern youth, particularly those who are criminalized, marginalized, or discriminated against. A product of the collaborative funding and efforts of the City of Toronto, the Toronto Public Library, and the Youth Challenge Fund, S.P.O.T. is currently in development, with plans to offer programming for youth, by youth.

“We’re creating real opportunities for young people who are facing challenges,” says project coordinator Femi James.

The S.P.O.T. Initiative, located within the Malvern Library, is a place designed specifically for youth arts projects. The

area features space for a dance studio, recording studio, media labs, and programming rooms, all of which will be available for use in the near future. Plans to build an exterior commons are also underway. The initiative has a direct focus on youth leadership and collaboration. James says youth members have been involved throughout the early stages of the development of S.P.O.T., from the construction and marketing processes to the initiative’s governance and programming plans. Throughout its development, S.P.O.T. also worked alongside the Malvern community to create what James calls a “wish list,” or what youth want access to through the initiative.

“They [the community] created the dream,” James says.

James says youth involvement is of utmost importance in S.P.O.T., as it ensures that the initiative is meeting all of the needs and desires of its young members. “It just wouldn’t make sense to [develop the program] without the

input of young people,” she says.

Youth have also had opportunities to work with the S.P.O.T., alongside adult allies, to develop skills and gain experience in fields they aspire to work in.

For Jermaine Copeland, a Malvern resident and prospective construction worker, S.P.O.T. has given him hands-on experience that will further his career in the construction industry. The experience, James says, has helped Copeland break into the industry and will increase his career options once the S.P.O.T. project is complete.

Though construction and development are still underway, James says S.P.O.T. is always looking to recruit Malvern youth to assist with the initiative.

For more information or to contribute to the initiative, join the S.P.O.T. group on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/271865852825168/>), follow the initiative on Twitter (@MalvernSPOT), or visit the Malvern Library.

CLEANING UP THE COMMUNITY

Kinthusha Thanabalasingam

Community Submission

Students from the Malvern community came together last April to clean up the neighborhood, taking part in celebrating earth day.

It was a warm sunny day with a slight breeze, definitely a perfect day to gather around and make the streets of Malvern a better place.

The gathered teens were divided into groups and sent off with a volunteer to clean up different parts of our community, it was a great opportunity for the youth of Malvern to understand the importance of our earth and the impact we make towards it. Many students observed how frequently we litter and felt it was crucial to begin taking a step forward to help the earth we live on.

“I want to make Malvern a beautiful place” said Guhar Ullah.

What is earth day? A day to recognize our earth and the importance of keeping it clean, a day to bring awareness to our community letting them know our actions impact our earth tremendously. Many walking down the streets were

unaware of this day, when asked what day it is today they responded saying “I’m so busy I don’t have time for all of this, but I am guessing it is clean up day or something.” Hopefully this day will help them see the bigger picture that it is our responsibility to take care of the Earth.

While taking part in the clean up, an important issue became apparent. There were a limited number of garbage cans on the streets. They were much too widely spread apart between each signal. One volunteer explained that this could be why people are inclined to litter, they get too lazy to wait for the next garbage bin down the next signal therefore they choose to throw it on the streets.

After all the groups were done cleaning up they came together at the Malvern community center and participated in the sculpture contest organized by one of the mentors- it was definitely exciting and all the students eagerly anticipated the final results. It was a great way to use recycled material and have fun, the final winners were announced and food was served. At the end of this event all the students that participated received community

service hours to put toward their school requirements.

The students thoroughly enjoyed this day, and without a doubt it was also a learning experience. They became aware of how much garbage there is in the community and that putting it directly trash directly in a bin can have positive long lasting effects on the community. “I want to get rid of the stereotype of Malvern being a ghetto place,” said Hany Pathan. A very proud student living in Malvern.

This opportunity was eye opening for many that don’t appreciate the earth we live on.

“Earth day should not be only once an year, we should all be aware of the importance of our earth and actively take part in keeping our Malvern a more beautiful place” says Larina Yogarajah.

Note: The Toronto Star reported that Toronto Hydro announced power usage was down 6.8% during Earth Hour in the city of Toronto. This is an improvement over 2011’s Earth Hour when usage dropped by 5%. However, in 2010 there was a 10% drop and in 2009 a 15% drop.