

BEHIND THE SCENES:

Jimi Izrael

Jimi Izrael is a “Tri-C student from way back.” Today, the Euclid resident is the widowed father of four and a project manager/student media advisor at the College. He started a project called My Tri-C Life about three years ago.

TRI-C TIMES: What is My Tri-C Life?

JIMI ISRAEL: It is an interdisciplinary, blind collaboration wherein students from First Year Experience, English and other classes script out real-life scenes from their Tri-C life that another student illustrates into an eight-panel story in comic-strip form. The first two issues involved all campuses. Currently, it is decidedly Metro-centric.

TCT: What was its inspiration?

JJ: Writer Harvey Pekar, working with artists like Clevelander Gary Dumm, turned scenes from his everyday Cleveland life as an amateur scholar and professional file clerk into a graphic novel series — American Splendor — and received international acclaim. He used to say that we are all heroes of our own stories, and I see heroes every day — in my classes, on campus, at the bus stop. How did they get here? And where do they want to go? How does the life they live compare to the life they want?

These stories matter because our students matter. The more they say, the more we listen, the closer we get, and the better we can serve them. Everyone has a story you can learn from. As Harvey might say, everyday life is pretty complicated stuff.



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TCT: What are the goals of the project?

JJ: To get our students trying something new and unique. Also, college life can isolate you at first. If students can read and share how they have navigated through — or not — maybe they won't feel so alone and be empowered to stay the course.

TCT: What are the reasons for not having the artists and writers meet?

JJ: The pedagogical conceit of the thing — to instill rudimentary best practices

about virtual collaboration, a necessary skill in the 21st century — precludes it. Also, consider this: If any of us had the opportunity to direct the caricature artists at Cedar Point, we'd either a) start a fight, or b) it would never get done.

TCT: What has working on this project taught you?

JJ: Patience. Humility. Collegiality. The subtle virtues of Maker's Mark. And the transcendence of a powerful story, well told.