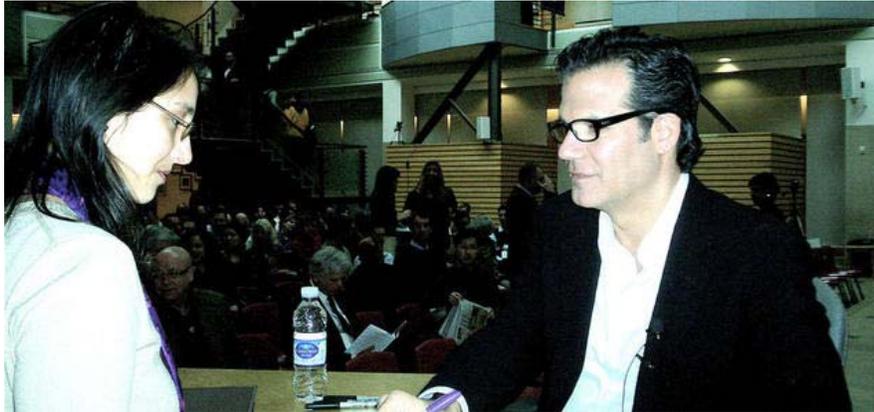


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Richard Florida rules

BY MARC WEISBLOTT April 04, 2008 18:04

"We have got to stop whining about how *bad* this place is," **Richard Florida** suggests as a headline in the antiseptic **Rotman School of Management** yesterday, launching his new book *Who's Your City?* "Just stop it."

The author of a book venturing to explain "How the creative economy is making where to live the most important decision of your life" could have lived in New York City, yet, he chose Toronto. The global attention granted Florida's populist theories will lead us to wonder who should feel more grateful for that.

"This is one of five, six... three? No, two — two! — really great cities in North America," Florida tells his fellow professor, **Merik Gertler** of the Faculty of Business, between signing copies of *Who's Your City?*, whose \$32.95 cover price included admission to the after-work event. "And my humble opinion is that this is a more peaceful country than the one I left. When I lived in DC, every conversation seemed to be about who we were going to invade next."

But it was during his time at George Mason University where his theories of a Creative Class took shape — after establishing his academic career at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh — becoming the stuff of best-selling books, an institute, and lucrative speaking gigs. "I thought that if I moved to Washington that maybe I could change the United States," Florida demurs. And, when that wasn't quite happening, he made a little spreadsheet — not on a computer, but napkin scribbles, he did it — to pinpoint the precise place where he needed to be.

Oh, combined with the fact that Rotman School dean **Roger Martin** offered him an opportunity to run the \$120 million Prosperity Institute from a Toronto-based think tank, what amounts to a tertiary part-time job as a professor, he earns \$169,999.98 a year according to this week's **Public Sector Salary Disclosure**.)

"I've been accused of cloying boosterism and sucking up to Toronto," says Florida, claiming he and wife Rana gambled their life savings to relocate here. "So, it's hard for me to say it stinks — maybe in another year when I've paid off a bit more of the mortgage."

Not likely, given how the Prosperity Institute was given an assignment in **last week's provincial budget**, recruited by Premier **Dalton McGuinty** to study the composition of Ontario's workforce and economy. "Chances are, the picture painted won't be bleak."

Florida can't understand why people blame Mayor **David Miller** for everything, though — he doesn't even have enough power to deserve the ridicule. He asserts that many unspecified American cities haven't got a prayer in the hands of civic officials throwing weight around: "Just a leadership class that just squelches out everything."

Toronto biases don't dominate *Who's Your City?* — save for an opening chapter where Florida takes literally **Stephen Colbert's** on-camera taunting of a bohemian artist who just wants to sell your house," boasting that he was already packed for his move north.

And, true to his image of chortling at every criticism that crosses his path — the **Scrolling Eye coverage** of his Toronto Board of Trade dinner speech in **summarily dismissed as idiotic** — Florida points out a critical item by **Marc Fisher** in that day's *Washington Post* titled "Home Is Where the Paycheck Is"

"Children of a mosaic of races" appeared at Florida's door in Rosedale last Halloween, he writes, which wasn't his experience in DC, where "not a single door in three years." (Could these be kids from Scarborough who knew where to find the good loot and invade the area each Oct. 31?)

"Of course he didn't see kids on Halloween," writes Fisher in response to the trick-or-treater index. "What halfway intelligent kid would waste his time a dark neighborhood of widely separated houses way off the main drag? Especially when, just a few blocks away, kids could find block after block teen treaters each year."

Meanwhile, the book earned even wider attention this week — a savvy sleight-of-hand promotion since it recycled a [year-old post](#) from the Creative Class Singles Map," into a piece for *The Boston Globe's* widely-heeded Ideas section. Just a one-page diversion in his book, Florida apologetically shrugs, all shows more blue balls — representing a surplus of single men — in the west coast of the United States compared to more unattached women than me perfect fodder for the girlie media to chew on.

Jezebel gave it the bluntest headline of all: "[A Statistical Guide to Why You're Not Getting Laid.](#)" And, for the 200 people at this Rotman gathering, Florida above it all and divert to gab about the wealth of empty-nesters — since that's what business school is for.

C'mon, why not spin *Who's Your City?* as an Alpha male answer to *The Rules*?

"Rich, this economy stuff is great, but don't you know there are other personality types?" recalls Florida of a conversation with a psychologist. So, the "Cities have personalities, too." And that includes the neurotics, something he claims to be intimately familiar with from around his birthplace of New Jersey. trust me, I've met quite a few of them around here."

No such neurotic projection from this ever-strapping 50-year-old guru, though, who could easily be a case study in how beefcake genetics might be a get their opinions published.

The Globe and Mail continues to provide an adopted-hometown platform for Florida's musings — even though the promised monthly strolls through the off. The inevitable excerpt from *Who's Your City?* appeared alongside a quasi-critical review, though.

The latest *Globe* column by Florida addressed "[Obama and the class question,](#)" a conversation he insists they can't even have in the US. By contrast, Florida accent we hear least in person, around here — the American one.

Still, you know what all this Creative Class gabber is missing? There's no actual feeling of bohemia — which can possibly be blamed on the academic settings where Florida pontificates for money, although he's just been tapped for a [keynote speech](#) at the Banff World Television Festival in June.

Florida also seems to be using his blog for a dry run for a book about music scenes, posting a research paper called "[Sonic City: The Evolving Economic Music Industry.](#)" Last month, he posted [a list of his favourite bands](#), predictable eclectic-middle-aged public-radio listener stuff, with a few caveats — **John Mellencamp**, **Allman Brothers Band**, the first two **Bruce Springsteen** albums, and **Pat Metheny** only when part of a trio.

Rana Florida has also gotten into the act, using the Creative Class Exchange to [complain about the aesthetics of airlines and airports.](#)

"Have trend idea will travel," would appear to be the magic Florida formula — and he's found a big city provincial enough to admire it.

"I just wanted to find a place that fits the bizarre personality that is me," he says of the journey that got him here. "If I've struggled with it — as a so- imagine what everyone else is going through."

Previously on the Scroll: [Richard Florida WTF?](#)

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625 Church St, 6th Floor, Toronto M4Y 2G1