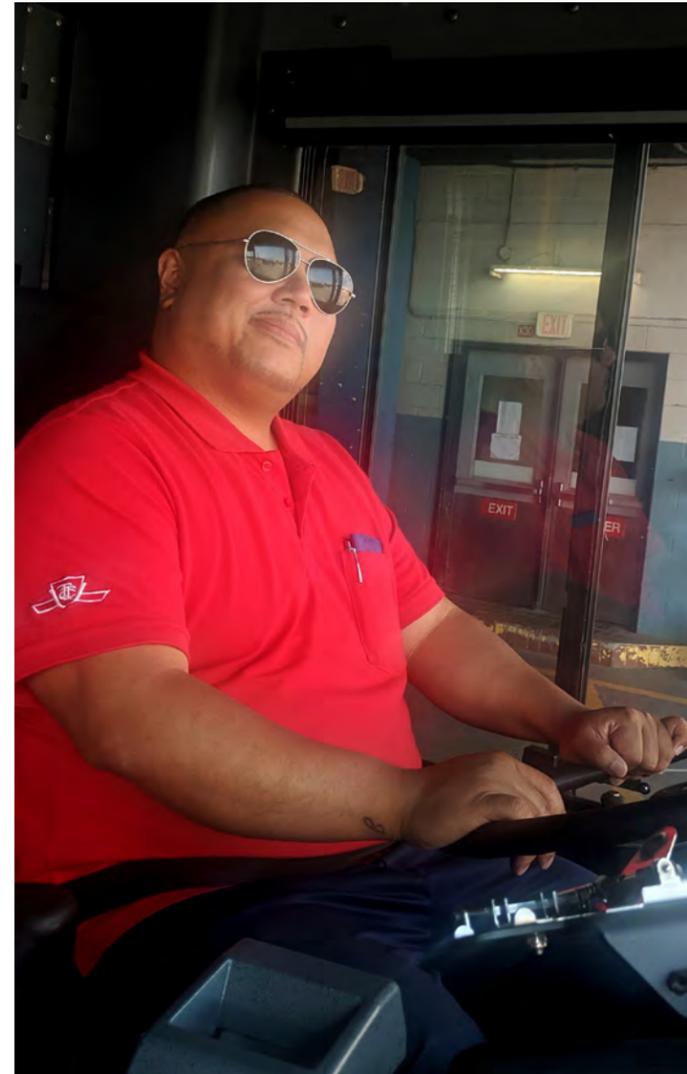




// ATU - DRIVER FEATURE (THE AMALGAMATED TRANSIT UNION)

The Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 113 is a proud partner of Battle 416 and is thrilled to be supporting Toronto's diverse and growing basketball community.

ATU Local 113 is a labour union representing over 11,500 men and women who operate and maintain North America's third largest public transit system. We also represent the transit operators of Transdev Canada in the York Region, just north of the City of Toronto. Our members reflect the cultural diversity of our riders, a large and growing proportion are immigrants from over 70 countries.



We are proud to present **Ryan Gonzalez** a TTC bus operator, and ATU Local 113 member, who also had a career in teaching. To continue his work championing youth sports, and to highlight his new understanding of the importance of transit accessibility to his community, he became a Battle 416 organizer to help fill the gap in sports opportunities he himself experienced growing up.

We asked Ryan more about why he's proud ATU Local 113 is involved in Battle 416, and how the event is critical in improving Toronto.

How did you get involved in Battle 416?

The main organizer, Clyde Pacis, is a close childhood friend of mine. He was looking for people in his network to get involved with Battle 416 so he reached out.

Clyde and I are of Filipino heritage and basketball is the Philippines' national sport. Through the Philippine Independence Day Council (PIDC), Clyde had been a part of the Mabuhay Cup, a decades-old annual invitational tournament in the GTA that brings together Filipino communities from across North America. Drawing inspiration from the Mabuhay Cup, he founded Battle 416.

Why is it important to be involved in Battle 416?

I knew it would be a something special as the sport is more popular than ever. Fresh off the Raptors' championship win, Toronto's riding a basketball high. More importantly though, Battle 416 is a tournament that fills a void left by other tournaments that are no longer available. For instance, the NBA used to host annual outdoor summer basketball tournaments, called Hoop it Up which evolved into Raptorsfest but they haven't had one of those for years.

Streetball tournaments for the public just aren't around. Battle 416 has become what Toronto wants and needs. We didn't know it was missing until we had this opportunity.

Hosting the tournament at Nathan Phillips Square is also an amazing asset. It's visible and the heavy foot traffic means we're able to draw crowds. Mayor Tory is all-in on the initiative, and understands how this tournament provides an outlet not only for youth, but for Toronto's culture and community.

What ideas do you bring to Battle 416?

The idea to create a magazine was based on the desire to make the tournament about something more than basketball. We really wanted Battle 416 to celebrate Toronto's urban and street culture.

I wanted to get ATU Local 113, the union I am a part of, involved. Not only to find a sponsor for the tournament, but to also give the union a vehicle to get its message out. I reached out to Deborah Littman, who was on board right away and helped me get executive approval for union involvement.

I'm also a part of the TTC Rec Committee and coach the Wilson basketball team. I really encouraged the team to enter Battle 416 as a competitor.

The TTC is made up of a diverse workforce. What does this mean for you?

Yes, we are as diverse as the city itself and it's great. The more diverse we are, the more we can connect with our riders since we're a better reflection of one another.

How do you translate your work at the TTC to the community?

I'm a big believer in how progressive a city Toronto is. For our city to be progressive, it has to provide the types of opportunities and programs for people to thrive. Access to those opportunities is just as important and affordable transportation is a vital part of that access. People from all walks of life, from all demographics need affordable public transit that works.

Doug Ford is focused on uploading Toronto's subway, which is the first step on a slippery slope to privatization. What do you think about that?

Privatization would really affect the ability to keep transit affordable for the public. Torontonians' ability to conduct their day-to-day affairs will be affected by rises in cost and changes in service. Ordinary riders will be negatively impacted.

This might sound corny but the reason why I love my job so much is because I get people where they need to be. I've done that as a teacher, as a coach – I am a big fan of making things better for people and this job gives me the opportunity to do just that.

So for me, the idea that a government decision would affect my ability to help people on such a profound level does not feel good. The move will not only threaten the jobs that provide this great service but affect the public's ability to use it.

What's your best advice to young community members involved in Battle 416?

My philosophy when it comes to youth sports and coaching student athletes is to emphasize the importance of balance.

It takes effort and dedication to be good at whatever you want to be good at. But at a developmental age, it is just as important to do your homework. It builds critical thinking and decision-making skills, whether it's on the court or on the street.

The ability to think. To react. These are all important things that you learn by keeping up a good balance of school, education and extra-curricular activities.