

Panel of black men offer keys to good health

BY LAYLA FARMER
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Winston-Salem State University's Black Men for Change (BMC) tackled some of the toughest challenges facing 21st Century African American men and ways of overcoming them last week during the student organization's Seventh Annual Black Male Symposium.

Staged in the Anderson Conference Center's Dillard Auditorium Feb. 17, the symposium included a daytime panel discussion and an evening keynote speech by Dr. Marc Lamont Hill, a professor at Columbia University and Fox News commentator.

Five panelists - Thomas Clarke Jr., Christopher Fleming, Kerry Harbor, Christopher Martin and Damon Scott - discussed issues ranging from food and nutrition to the importance of marriage and sexual responsibility.

Ed Hanes, director of the Office of Equal Opportunity at WSSU, served as the moderator for the event, which drew a modest crowd of students and staff members. He peppered the panel with questions about adopting healthy eating and exercise



Jeffrey Mizell

habits, fending off diseases that plague the black community and combating social ills such as the high rate of single parenthood in African American households.

Adopting diet and exercise routines can help lower the prevalence of deadly ailments such as hypertension and stroke in the black community, said Harbor, director of Strength and Conditioning for the school. He says he takes his own health decisions seriously.

"A lot of choices about my diet, about my lifestyle come from my family history," explained Harbor, who also teaches weight training classes at WSSU. "Diet and



Kerry Harbor speaks as fellow panelists look on.

exercise are a lot of the things that help control the genetic factors that I have."

Fleming, a WSSU student and Community Service chair of BMC, admitted that young people sometimes don't give their health the attention it deserves.

"A lot of times, we get distracted with everything that's going on in our day-to-day routine," remarked Fleming, a graduating senior and corporal in the Marine Corps Reserve. "We just put health on the back burner and it's not a back burner

issue."

Clarke, a student services assistant in the Office of the Registrar, recommended that audience members seek out fitness routines that suit their personalities and lifestyles. Clarke, who suffers from type 2 diabetes and hypertension, has recently begun playing the Wii for exercise.

"For me, finding something to do that I enjoy is really critical," he stated. "I would just encourage you to find something you can do that gets you moving. It doesn't have to be formal

exercise."

Scott, who grew up in York, Pennsylvania, said Southern cuisine is to blame for the many negative health trends that affect African Americans locally. As senior food service director for Aramark, a global contract management company that oversees the school's cafeteria, Scott says he's seen firsthand Southerners' penchant for anything fried.

Winston-Salem State in particular has a love affair with unhealthy entrees such as fried chicken and fish, he

added. While Aramark must deliver the foods its customers demand, the company hopes to be able to help WSSU students and staff adopt healthier eating habits over time, Scott said.

"We're actually in the process of slowly trying to change that," he commented. "Our goal is to educate folks to get them to know that there's so many more things out there."

"It was very informative," said WSSU student Jeffrey Mizell of the panel discussion. "It was good to hear because some of the things they were talking about I can relate to."

Mizell, 47, a mass communications major and a father of two, said attending at least one on-campus lecture is a requirement for his African American studies class. He was glad he picked the Black Male Symposium.


"You should have events like this because it provides information," he commented. "Hopefully, somebody will get a grasp of what's going on or what they need to do to succeed."

For more information about Black Men for Change, visit www.wssu.edu.

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