

The undeniable power of the spoken word

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“Empowerment. Strength. Courage. Wisdom. Unity. Rejuvenation. Coherence. Passion. Compassion. Love. Hope. Power.

What common thread strings these words together?

The Collective: a localized group of seven socially-conscious African American males and females who use their talent in poetry, vocal performance and musicianship to convey a message of collective consciousness.

"Initially, The Collective was an open mic event held weekly at a local club, but soon it became obvious from the public turn-out that we were providing a need that had been neglected for some time," said Josephus Thompson, III, founder and member of the group. He went on to explain that the group eventually formed through the common bond of wanting to address the needs of the public and satisfying their individual desire to perform their talents.

In January 2004, Thompson, along with Crystal "Soultry" Washington, Christina "Womenstorm" Ryals, Brandon "B-Star" Thompson, Ian "Ian-tro" Knight, Shawn "Goldman" Stilts, Demetrius "D-Noble" Noble and Vania "Amaris" Howard became known as The Collective.

The group displayed their talents to the Guilford College community at 8 p.m. on Feb. 19 in Dana auditorium. Coordinator of Student Involvement and Leadership Adrienne Craig organized the event.

Together, The Collective wowed and amazed a very large and enthusiastic crowd of Greensboro locals and Guilford College students.

First-year Brianna Robinson was among the few Guilford students that came out in support of the event. She explained that she first heard Thompson in her English class with Anne Lundquist last semester.

"He was awesome then, and he and the group were awesome tonight," Robinson said. "Any chance I may get to see him perform, I plan on doing so."

The performers seamlessly wove a poetic pattern of unity through spoken word, vocal performances and dramatic skits that concentrated on loving one's self, respecting one's self, having power over one's actions, the marginalization of black people by the use of the "N" word and loving and respecting the black family.

Poems such as "Until," performed by Amaris, spoke of putting oneself into the shoes of a black person to better understand what struggles in life are faced on a daily basis by those who wear the skin



His

WWW.THECOLLECTIVE.WS

"The Collective" onstage

permanently.

All of the performances were thought-provoking and soul-stirring, but one of the stand-outs was when Womenstorm spoke about embracing her blackness and being at peace with who she is as a black woman. She paid tribute to the physical attributes that separate black people, mainly women, from other races and cultures.

Afros, voluptuous lips and round hips, with rear ends to match, have become an acceptable focal point of what beauty is in mainstream media, but black women who possess these attributes naturally have been excluded in the media's reporting of this beauty type. Womenstorm speaks to the black female in an effort to assist them in viewing their physical selves and demands that they gain control of the placement of value and worth on themselves.

The other stand-out performance, by D-Noble, received a standing ovation. The poem "Back" - the closer of the show - appealed to black individuals who are prepared to ask for the return of what was stolen from black people during slavery and that which continues to be pilfered today.

Noble's passion for his work rang in every syllable he spoke on Saturday night.

belief and enthusiasm about what he speaks is undeniable and therefore contagious: "I enjoy what I do and I am glad that people can feel that through my performances."

The Collective will host an open mic event Feb. 25 in the Underground; they also host open mic night at Club 9 the first Sunday of every month. For additional event information on The Collective, visit their website, www.TheCollective.ws.



TOP TEN SONGS

- The Nein.....The Nein ep
- William ShatnerHas Been
- Ted Leo and the PharmacistsShake the Sheets
- Talib KweliThe Beautiful Struggle
- Mates of State.....All Day EP
- CakePressure Chief
- Neko Case.....The Tigers Have Spoken
- Lesbians on EcstasyS/T
- Brian WilsonSmile
- OwenI Do Perceive



LISA MEAGHER/GUILFORDIAN
Cast photo

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