

Author JL King will appear in Winston-Salem

CHRONICLE STAFF REPORT

Controversial author and HIV/AIDS activist JL King is slated to headline two workshops in Winston-Salem. He will take part in an event themed "No More Secrets, No More Lies" tomorrow (Friday, March 19) at 9 p.m. at the Church of the Holy Spirit Fellowship, 1005 Burke Street, Suite B in the Lower Level. On Saturday, March 20 at 7 p.m., King will be a part of the "Lets Remove the Masks & Talk" workshop at Winston-Salem State University's Thompson Student Center (Room 207C).

The events are being sponsored by Speak Life, Inc., a new HIV/AIDS awareness and advocacy organization. King is a member of Speak Life's Board of Advisors. The WSSU Office of Student Development and Church of the Holy Spirit Fellowship are also co-sponsors.

King has been credited and criticized for bringing the issue of black "straight" men who secretly have sex with other men to national view. His book "On the Down Low: A Journey into the Lives of 'Straight' Black Men Who Sleep With Men" became a New York Times bestseller and earned him guest appearances on "Oprah" and coverage in Newsweek and Time.

Most recently, King has made a name for himself as an AIDS/HIV activist. He travels the country to urge African Americans, especially, to protect themselves from the disease and to more freely discuss the topics of HIV and sexuality. King also continues to churn out books. His other titles include "Coming Up from the Down Low: The Journey to Acceptance Healing and Honest Love," "Dear JL...Real Stories from Real People" and his first novel, "Love on a Two-Way Street." King has also produced a number of documentaries, including "The DL Exposed," which earned record ratings when it was shown on BET in 2006.

Both events are free and open to the public, although Friday's program is specifically geared to issues affecting the Gay, Bisexual, Lesbian and Transgender community.

For more information, go to www.speaklifenc.org.



Photo courtesy of JL King



Photos by Layla Farmer

Union Baptist Pastor Rev. Sir Walter Mack Jr. speaks as panelists (from left) Dr. Donald Reaves, Whitney McCoy, Bill Hayes, Scott Bauer and Brenda Allen listen.

Reaves

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the University of Chicago, but he says he never forgot his blue collar roots.

"I keep a picture of me in that truck in my office to remind myself of the power of education and to remind myself how fortunate and lucky I've been," the chancellor related.

Reaves said he came to Winston-Salem two and a half years ago with a goal.

"I thought and I still believe that I can make a real difference at Winston-Salem State," he said.

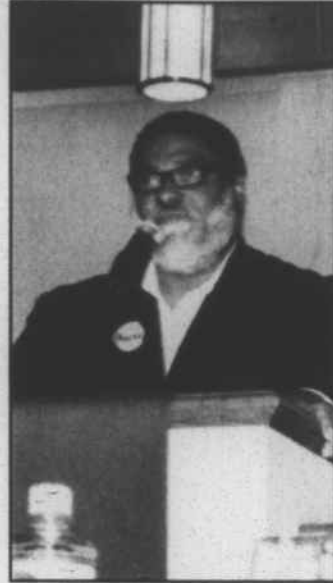
The chancellor said change is inevitable and necessary at WSSU and other historically black colleges and universities.

"Today's HBCUs must compete not only with other HBCUs, but with the majority institutions that are seeking to enroll black students," he said. "You can't compete unless you're offering a quality education, and you can't do that unless you're willing to change with the times."

Reaves says he still stands by his decision to move the school back to Division II athletics, a move that he insists was "a financial decision - nothing more, nothing less." Moving the school back to Division II freed up some funding that could be used for academics, he said.

"When resources are limited, the right decisions must be made about how to spend the money that is available," he commented. "...It was the right decision then, and it's the right decision today."

Reaves spoke briefly about the school's strategic plan, which was completed just over a month ago, before joining SGA



Dr. Eversley

President Whitney McCoy, Athletic Director Bill Hayes, Board of Trustees Chair Scott Bauer and Provost Brenda Allen on a panel to receive questions from audience members on a variety of issues facing WSSU and its students.

One audience member repeated a rumor she had heard about Reaves making major decisions without consulting alumni or students from the university. McCoy rebutted the claim, saying that she meets with the chancellor regularly.

"We have the opportunity to meet with Chancellor Reaves and his senior level administration twice a year. They have given us the opportunity to appoint ... members of the student body to a number of committees," she related. "They are very open to the SGA and the student body as far as asking our opinion."

Concerns about the university's lease at Bowman Gray stadium were also raised. Hayes and Reaves both agreed that the lease, which is held by the city, needed to be re-negotiated to provide WSSU optimal access to the facility.

"I'm all about making a better academic environment for our student-athletes," Hayes said. "The key to the whole thing right now is getting a better deal with the city so that we can have a chance."

Allen fielded questions from District Court Judge Denise Hartsfield who inquired whether having a criminal record would bar a student from admission. Allen said each student is evaluated based on a variety of factors and wouldn't be excluded solely because of a blemish on their record. She added that the university works to resolve on-campus issues internally without involving the law enforcement whenever possible.

One audience member expressed her gratitude to the Ministers Conference and Reaves for hosting the forum.

"This is what we need," she said. "I've heard a lot today. I've seen Dr. Reaves, but I've never had the pleasure of having a conversation with him. This feels like a conversation to me."

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