

ROOTS

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SPRING!

CAL POLY



MCC
MULTICULTURAL CENTER



Meet Your New Best Buddy At April's ATOG

April's Another Type of Groove will feature internationally-renown slam poet Buddy Wakefield and will be on Wednesday, April 2, at 7 p.m., in the PAC Pavilion.

Winner of the Individual World Slam competition twice in his career, Wakefield has performed in an extensive range of notable venues, including The Fillmore, San Quentin State Penitentiary, CBGB, and Scotland's Òran Mór. He has also been featured on NPR, the BBC, and HBO's Def Poetry Jam.

In addition to touring full time, Wakefield serves on the Board of Directors for Youth Speaks Seattle and is a member of Soloman Sparrow's Electric Whale Revival, a performance group that features some of the country's most prominent spoken word artists.

Wakefield is known for delivering raw, rounded, high energy performances full of humor and heart

As always, there will be an open mic so come and kick a poem or watch some of the best poets San Luis Obispo has to offer.

Lantern Festival Returns in April

Experience Asian cultural traditions on Saturday, April 26th, when the 14th Annual Lantern Festival takes over Cal Poly's University Union Plaza from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. The event showcases Asian culture through performances, cultural foods, and crafts.



Youth Politics in the Age of Hip-Hop Rap Sessions Discussion Comes to Cal Poly

The MultiCultural Center is bringing Rap Sessions: Community Dialogues on Hip-Hop, a national tour focused on hip-hop, youth, and civic participation and the 2008 presidential campaign, to campus on April 8, 2008 in building 33 (Fisher Science) room 286 at 8:00 p.m.

The national discussion tour unites a diverse panel of leading hip-hop activists, artists and youth politics experts to engage youth and community leaders in candid, compelling conversations about ways hip-hop generation voters can organize to have an impact on this year's election. Targeting the hip-hop generation and their younger millennial siblings, these dynamic and provocative discussions are designed to inform young voters on the candidates, the issues, and prepare them to participate

fully in the upcoming election.

"The 2008 Presidential Election is the most important election of this generation's lifetime," notes Bakari Kitwana, the Executive Director of Rap Sessions and the author of *The Hip-Hop Generation*. "The goal of these gatherings is to educate youth on their civic rights and responsibilities, and, equally important, to help young voters understand ways to place their issues on the national agenda."

The activists coming to Cal Poly are:

- Jeff Johnson, BET's Cousin Jeff Chronicles, director of Truth is Power and author of *Let's Get Free: Strategies for Organizing the Hip-Hop Voting Bloc*;
- Hip-hop political organizer Angela Woodson, co-chair of the 2004 National Hip-Hop Political Convention

and director of Faith-based Initiatives for the Ohio Governor's Office;

- Public policy analyst Dr. Maya Rockeymoore, author of *A Political Action Handbook for the Hip-Hop Generation* and the former chief of staff for Congressman Charlie Rangel;

- Billy Wimsatt, co-founder of the League of Young Voters and author of *How to Get Stupid White Men Out of Office*;

- Rosa Clemente, Hip-Hop activist, journalist and community organizer.

Bakari Kitwana, the moderator of these discussions, is the co-founder of the first ever National Hip-Hop Political Convention and former editor of *The Source*. His book, *The Hip-Hop Generation: Young Blacks and the Crisis in African American Culture* has been adopted as a course book at over 100 colleges and universities across the country. A consultant for the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, Kitwana has been acknowledged as an expert on youth culture and hip-hop politics by CNN, Fox News, CNBC, BET and other leading news outlets. His writings have appeared in the *Village Voice*, *The New York Times*, *The Nation*, *Savoy* and the *Boston Globe*. Currently Artist-in-Residence at the Center for the Study of Race Politics and Culture at the University of Chicago, he teaches a course in the political science department entitled, "The Politics of The Hip-Hop Generation." *Why White Kids Love Hip-Hop: New Realities of Race in America* is his most recent book.



Mahogany Browne: Nothing But The Truth

Mahogany Browne is admirably frank – and it's not just her stage persona. On stage she quips and tells jokes in between poems because, as she put it, if she didn't, her poetry would make audiences depressed. This fact is hard to agree with as her poetry has an empowering perspective; it outlines what is wrong and gives voice to what should be done to make it right.

Following her performance at March's Another Type of Groove, Browne said of her ability to joke on stage, "I'm hilarious."

Watching her on stage make light of her use of profanity despite there being a young child in the audience, you could see how her claim was justified. After hearing the child's voice she said, "She's going to be in preschool tomorrow like, 'one, two, s***.'"

And in one of her poems, she recounted every kiss she's ever had. After the poem, she challenged the audience to guess how many people she has kissed, the winner was given a free CD.

Browne's poetry career began in 1998 when her aunt took her to an open mic. "I was like, 'I can't do poetry.' I saw Love Lones, that was cool, but, 'I can't do it,' she said, "And then I saw someone get up there and go off. She was like this sweet, timid, little girl, that's the persona she had, and then in the middle of her poem she just went berserk. I was like oh, I love it, I can do that. And then I never stopped."

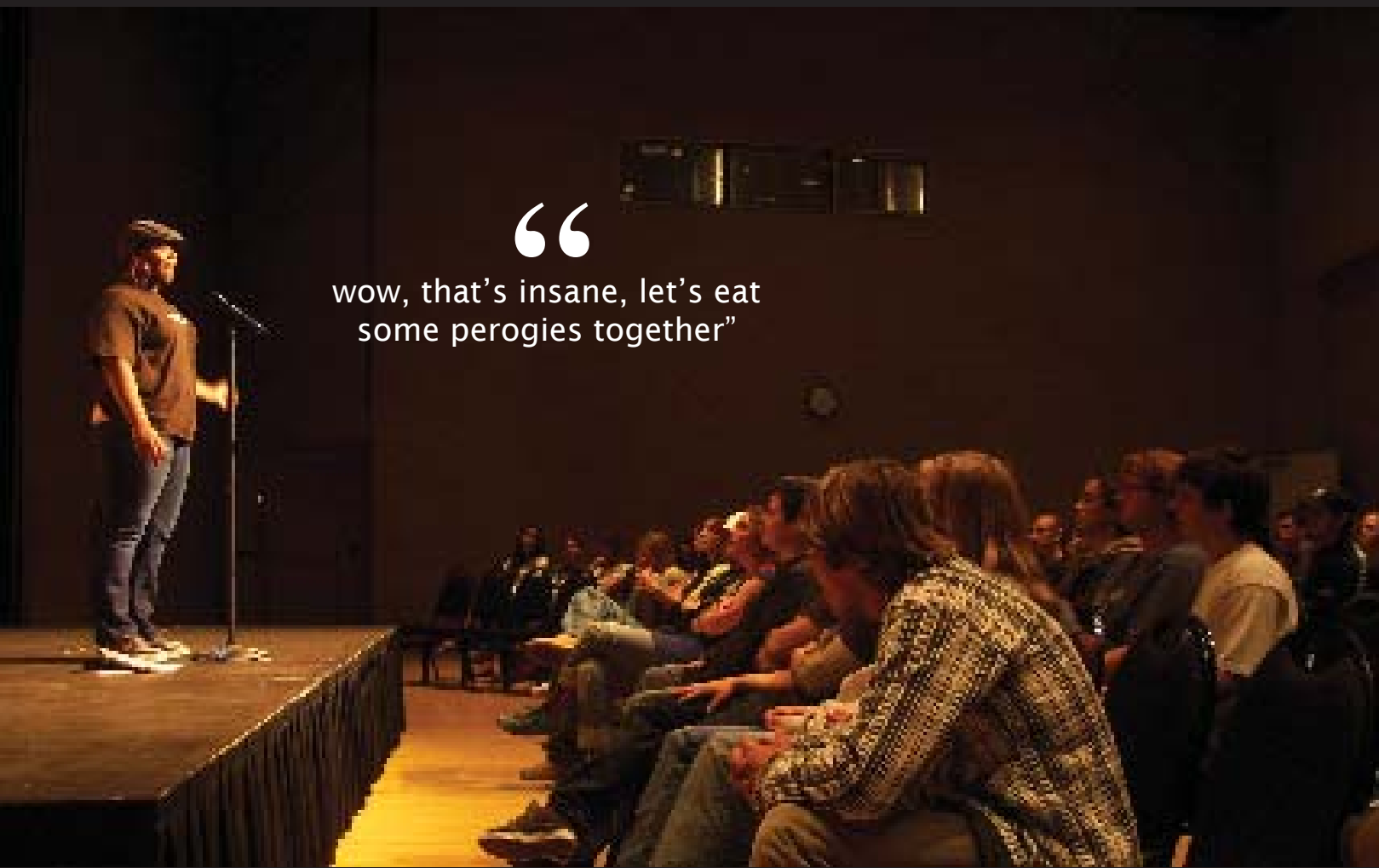
She said that her old material was "wack." Asked what her first poem was about, Browne laughed, "it was horrible, god, it was about a man trying to pick me up and me being so in love with my boyfriend that he couldn't stand a chance and it was all like, popping s*** and they thought it was great, I got a great response." Speaking on the experience of performing the poem, she said, "I got up there, I read it off the paper and I was shaking and it was wack and they were like 'whoa.' I was like, 'for real? I got more of that s*** let's go.'"

Asked how she would re-write the poem, Browne said, "I wouldn't I would burn it." She then added, "there was a moment in my beginning career that I actually said, 'I dialed star-69,' those words should never be in a poem, never."

Though she doesn't like her oldest works, she recognizes their importance in shaping her as an artist. "I feel like nobody's perfect when you come out, it's all about finding your voice and feeling comfortable enough to share it, so I recognize that that was my introduction and it only allowed me to get better. But it was really bad, I gotta be honest with myself, it's always about truth, I sucked."

Browne is originally from Oakland, and then her mom moved her to Sacramento, which she said, "is all bad. Sacramento is one of those places where, it's gotten better I've heard, but it wasn't really a good idea for you to be of any ethnicity there. I felt like if you're black, you have to be fair-skinned, because they were like 'you're ugly, you're this, you're...' it's not

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really conducive to people being happy to be themselves, you have to assimilate and lose touch with your roots, your accents, your family.”

Then, after discovering her passion for poetry, Browne moved to New York City with her then two-year-old daughter. She said that her grandmother, who has since passed away, is a huge inspiration to her poetry as she helped her with the move.

“My writing just jumped leaps and bounds when I moved, because you know, you have to live outside your box, you have to experience life outside of your comfort zone,” she said, “And being in Cali was such a comfort zone, I mean, I’m from here and moving to New York and sitting on subways and watching people piss themselves, I mean, I’ve never seen that s*** before.”

Browne added, “Being the only woman on the subway and walking down streets and meeting people in path trains and feeling like I met a serial killer, and I’m certain I did.”

She said that these new experiences resulted in lots of inspiration for her poems, but that there is no solitary, most inspirational moment. “I don’t know if there’s a single moment, I write for a lot of those little moments, like my daughter saying that I’m her hero and writing her first poem at four,” she said, “If I remember, she used to perform, she used to go, ‘black woman, my head hurt, no more no more, thank you.’ And we were like, ‘you’re four, and the worst part is, you sound like half of these poets already, like that’s insane right?’”

Browne said that her daughter’s statement came after criticism from her family over her move to New York City, “I received a lot of hell like ‘you don’t know what you’re doing, you’re leaving, you’re gonna mess up that baby’s life,’ and I was like, ‘I’m really just 22, 23, I want to try something else, give me a second to figure this out.’” She said that this made finding out her daughter was proud an even more powerful experience.

As far as her frank attitude is concerned, Browne said that it comes from a need to be strong as a female on the traveling poet circuit. She said that sometimes, show promoters would try to get away with not paying her for

her performance. “If I was a dude, it’d be like, ‘here’s your money, sorry to keep you waiting,’” she said adding, “That’s why I have to be extra hard, and that’s where the frank thing comes in. I don’t want there to be any misconceptions, ‘alright, you owe me money, could you give that to me before I get on stage? That’d be great. Thank you.’”

Asked what the best reaction to one of her poems was, Browne said that while performing in Poland, her words were interpreted on a screen for the Polish audience who speak English, but not near fluent enough to fully understand Slam Poetry. She said that one night, the screen was unavailable, but nevertheless,

after her performance, “a woman came up to me crying and said ‘I do not know what you said, but I understand it.’ I was like ‘wow, that’s insane, let’s eat some perogies together.’”

Browne is currently the owner of poetcd.com and a publishing company. She said that she erected the publishing company in 2007 because, “I was tired of waiting for people to do it for me, to find the artist in me enough to gamble on. I toured for five years straight and I still couldn’t find a literary agent.”

For more information on Mahogany Browne, visit her website at www.mobrowne.com

