

DECLARE YOURSELF

Spoken Word Fact Sheet

THE POWER OF SPOKEN WORD:

Although it is a little-known fact, the Declaration of Independence, the birth certificate of the United States, was intended to be performed aloud. From town to town, the notions of liberty, independence and equality were proclaimed by the revolutionary voices of young radicals using the words of the country's first "spoken word script."

Today, through the performances of the Declare Yourself spoken word artists, the power of spoken word will inspire America's youth in the same way that the reciting of the Declaration of Independence did more than 225 years ago.

The power of spoken word, sometimes known as performance poetry or slam poetry, lies in the authentic thoughts and performances of young people across all racial boundaries, backgrounds, and regions of the country. Spoken word is also more popular – and in an election year, more relevant – than ever. Declare Yourself will harness this energy through the entertainment and awareness-building capabilities of spoken word. Through a nationwide college tour of a live spoken word show combined with voter registration, empowerment meets entertainment in an experience that's part rally, part poetry, part music, part theater, and part contemporary revival. It's a synergy of the most galvanizing facets of youth culture, converging into one exploding live event.

The Declare Yourself spoken word showcase will focus on messages about activism, voting, democracy and empowerment of a new generation -- an experience that can only be described as revolutionary when delivered in a real way from the authentic voices of fresh new talent. In collaboration with filmmaker and stage director Charles Herman-Wurmfeld ("Kissing Jessica Stein," "Legally Blonde 2: Red, White and Blonde"), the Declare Yourself poets will use history to MAKE history by inspiring young voters to become active participants in our country's future.

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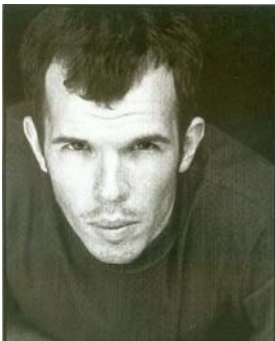
WHERE WE'RE GOING:

The Declare Yourself spoken word showcase will travel throughout 2004 on a nationwide tour, visiting 18 college campuses from January through March. These colleges include Keene State College, University of South Carolina, University of Florida, Florida State University, Mississippi State University, University of Arizona, Arizona State University, California State University-Fresno, University of California, Los Angeles, University of Southern California, San Diego State University, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Ohio State University, University of Michigan-Ann Arbor, University of Pennsylvania, Syracuse University, University of Pittsburgh and Iowa State University. In addition, the show will be a special feature at major concert tours in the summer of 2004.

WHO WE ARE:

The Declare Yourself spoken word artists, whose members represent a national cross-section of backgrounds and experiences, include: Steve Connell, Sekou (tha misfit), Gina Loring and Marty McConnell:

STEVE CONNELL:



Steve Connell has been slamming poetry for two years. In that time, he became the 2002 Hollywood Champion and the 2003 LA Champion. His 2003 LA team went on to win the National Poetry Slam Championship. He has been featured on Russell Simmons' "Def Poetry Jam" and Black Entertainment Television's (BET) "Lyric Café." His poem *I Am An American* was published recently in an anthology of American Voices called "Why Freedom Matters." He has one CD currently available, "the intimate nature of knife fights," and is working on his second CD. Steve is also an accomplished actor with a long list of theatrical credits. His first leading film role was in "the Beat," an independent film that debuted at the 2003 Sundance Film Festival.

SEKOU (THA MISFIT):



Sekou (tha misfit) is versatile performer who commands attention on any stage with a dynamic presence and energy. He is currently the National Poetry Slam Competition two-time champion, winning the 2003 team championship (with Team Los Angeles) and the 2002 individual championship, as well as the individual championship at the 2003 Word Up! National Poetry Slam. Sekou's work has been featured on several media outlets as well as on two national spoken word tours: the Underground Poet's Railroad, and currently on the Declare Yourself Spoken Word Showcase.

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GINA LORING:



The top-ranking female poet at the 2002 National Poetry Slam and a member of the 2002 Los Angeles Slam Team, Gina was featured on Russell Simmons' HBO "Def Poetry Jam" and BET's "Lyric Café." She was one of the handpicked poets to perform in a Norman Lear-produced showcase and on the Underground Poets Railroad documentary tour. Gina is also an up-and-coming vocalist with a poet's lyrical ability. Her highly reflective poetry contributes to her creation of powerful songs, encompassing subjects such as love, spirituality and social activism, which can be heard on her CD, "Sol Songs."

MARTY McCONNELL:



Marty McConnell transplanted herself from Chicago to New York City in 1999, after completing three national tours with the Morigan, an all-female performance poetry troupe she co-founded. She received her MFA in creative writing/poetry from Sarah Lawrence College, and went on to compete in the 2000, 2001, 2002, and 2003 National Poetry Slams with the NYC/Union Square team. She is a member of the louder ARTS Project, which runs two reading series, ongoing workshops and collaborative performances in New York City. Her work has been published in numerous anthologies, including "Will Work for Peace" and "In Our Own Words: Poetry of Generation X," as well as literary magazines including *Fourteen Hills* and *Blue Fifth Review*.

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