

DePaul News 2: The ABCs of Blackness - **My Blackness is too...Afrolicious, Beautylicious, Conscientious**

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By: Taylor Moody

There are very few times that black men and women discuss the issues of the hair and the body outside of intimate settings such as dorm rooms or corners in the cafeteria. We find ourselves confounded with the idea of each other's hair texture, razor bumps, dark/light skin, long nails, dark spots, and lips. Yet My Blackness is too...Afrolicious, Beautylicious, Conscientious delved into how the larger society views us as people of color and how we develop self-love within the majority culture.

The development of this event stemmed from DePaul University's Visiting Professor, Dr. Regina Spellers Sims', book signing of *Blackberries and Redbones* in the fall quarter. Attended by President and Historian of the Black Student Union respectively, Jaymee Lewis and Aqueelah Clark invited Dr. Speller Sims to facilitate a panel to included members of the community on hair and body politics as a discussion focus for critical thinking.

With doors opening and refreshments being offered on February 11th at 6pm, the dimly lit event began promptly at 6:30pm with a brief introduction of KrisdelaRash, a local spoken word performer whose pieces touched on female beauty and familial bonds that contribute to such. The program continued with libations being poured by Dr. Derise Toliver, Associate Professor in the School for New Learning, a welcome address and student selections by Quintin Collins, Devin Leigh and Javon Smith while interjected by demonstrations of hair and make-up.

To grace the panel and host a segment were Sherry Spellers and Jessica Williams. Spellers is a salon owner and licensed cosmetologist of over 20 years. She spoke to the audience on products such as olive oil, the importance of washing regularly (once a week) and how to braid locks, as she demonstrated on her male model. To test her skills, my friend and I went to her salon, located at 650 East 43rd Street, Amour Salon. I found that she talks to you about your hair, what products you use, and how often you get it done. I particularly liked the deep conditioning treatment she gave while not placing me under the dreaded hooded dryer as I expressed. The results were fantastic and she is great to see if you are transitioning to going natural. Jessica Williams is a make-up artist who boasts booking major campaign ads and intensive knowledge of the business. Picking a model from the crowd, Bonnie Bright was chosen. Williams expresses the importance of using clean tools, only using foundation where needed to even out skin and evening out skin from the lower jaw color so that the face and neck are not two distinct colors!

Most of the time we think of hair and body issues as being a concerned for only women, yet it was appreciated that the conversations were directed at both men and women! Williams

offered great tips on male facial skin care. Her rule of choice: Do not wash your face with a soap bar. It dulls and dries out the skin. Men, Jessica also says that if you want to clean and moisturize without the fragrance of women's products, Clinique has a good line of products just for you.

What was different about this event was the artistic vibe. From the poetry to the spoken word and make-up and hair demonstrations, the event was wrapped up with a panel facilitated by co-editor of Blackberries and Redbones, Dr. Regina Spellers Sims. Kory Wright, a male undergraduate student, Dr. Kimberly Moffitt, co-editor of Blackberries and Redbones, Jessica Williams and Sherry Spellers were all invited on the panel.

Let's not forget about the companies who came out and supported! In attendance were salons, a food company, a travel agency, multiple jewelry designers, innovative health drink vendors and more! Ending the event was music and networking as the DJ played songs that celebrated past and present feelings of black life and style. So as we look forward, let us continue to have these scholarly conversations. This extends to our families as we gather an appreciation for our various looks and styles. One important message was to consciously look at how we raise our children about what is beautiful and teach self-love so that no one can tell them they are not fabulous regardless of their body type or hair texture. I cannot forget to mention that another process in developing self love is to rid ourselves of self-hate. While Spellers Sims expresses that her work was not always seen as scholarly, we must apply scholarship in our everyday life by thinking critically as a method to encourage the beauty in others as well as ourselves.