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# ~~X~~ BET's Jeff Johnson hosts workshop during weekend conference

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The Black Student Union (BSU) held its third annual Student Leadership Conference on Saturday in an effort to discuss the prevalent issues African Americans have faced in the past and still are facing presently.

Special guest BET host and producer Jeff Johnson led his own workshop entitled "Hip-Hop and the

Liberation Struggle," during which he discussed civil rights and the misdirected leadership within the hip-hop community. He was asked to participate in the conference to convey an important message to the UB community and BSU members, according to BSU president William Donovan.

Johnson stated that a huge distinction exists between the liberation

movement and hip-hop. Hip-hop was created as a form of musical and cultural expression that used a social-political context. Johnson said what truly provided change was the Civil Rights Movement.

The workshop concluded with a discussion about the misleading messages that the hip-hop industry is sending out to the youth today.

"You don't have to be

mentored by somebody who is rich to get knowledge; you have to be mentored by somebody knowledgeable," Johnson said. "I don't want somebody to teach me how to make money. I want somebody to tell me what it feels [like] to be a black man in a country that no matter what they say, racism still exists."

Many guests expressed an appreciation for John-

son's ideas during the discussion portion of the workshop.

"Johnson's speech and the entire conference will hopefully motivate students to take action and make a change," said Buffalo State student Elisa Molina.

Another workshop offered at the conference was "Racism Rejuvenated:

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**Monday:** 38° high / 36° low  
Snow



**Tuesday:** 48° high / 38° low  
Thunderstorms



**Wednesday:** 40° high / 23° low  
Snow



## Role model for the future

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Acceptance Hinders Progression," lectured by Darnell Cummings.

The purpose of the discussion was to bring to light the recent uprising of racism in America and whether or not the community is slowly and quietly digressing back toward the "Jim Crow Era."

The objective of this year's conference is informing community members and those who attended the lecture about the state of complacency in the African American community, according to Donovan.

The conference featured speakers in four workshops that worked with this year's theme, "The Rebirth: Recapturing the Essence of the Black Liberation Struggle to Liberate our Communities."

"Basically these workshops focus on different areas [of struggle] that the black community faces on a regular basis" Donovan said. These areas include maintaining good credit, today's civil rights movement, racism in present day America and issues with the public school system.

"We are concerned about our black students because sometimes they do not receive an equal childhood education for a variety of reasons, ranging from low income, poor schooling, and single parent homes," Donovan said.

The leadership conference attracted participants from all around Buffalo, including Molina, who was interested in gaining information about leadership.

"Johnson addressed real political and social issues," Molina said. "His speech has prompted me



Alex Wallach / The Spectrum

BET host and producer Jeff Johnson spoke to students in his workshop about hip-hop's role in the liberation struggle, a part of BSU's third annual Student Leadership Conference.

to develop new leadership ideas that I cannot wait to implement as president of my sorority."

Christina Khoury, a sophomore early childhood development major, enjoyed the topics discussed and all the conference had to offer.

"As students, it's so important to get together and talk about these current issues in America," Khoury said. "Such issues should not be pushed under the rug and ignored."

Students who attended all the workshops found them to be both informative and motivational.

"It's unfortunate that more students didn't attend," said Abdirahman Farah, a junior psychology major. "Students come to leader-

ship conferences like this and look up to speakers that they will someday model to become leaders themselves."

Farah said the conference was a great way to teach African Americans how to develop a better society.

"It's partly about educating people who are hurting themselves and killing each other, and showing them how to start a new way of life," Farah said.

This year's conference was a great success due to the number of people that attended, according to Donovan.

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