

Shihan: Spoken Word Artist

Contributed by Amy Pachla
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At 8 PM, in the Lake Superior Room of the Cisler Center on the LSSU campus, spoken word artist Shihan appeared to perform for the students of LSSU as a part of our Laker Week festivities.

Shihan, as he is known, is currently living as a poet in Los Angeles. He is married with two children and has been a poet since 1997. Shihan has been featured on HBO's Def Poetry Jam, as well as having been involved in a few commercial endeavors, including his own spoken word recording and a television commercial.

He offered eleven poems of his own creation, along with a moving recitation of poet Nikki Rakes' "Hood Piece 32,653".

Most of Shihan's poetry centers around the more humble aspects of the human experience, striving to lift those things we occasionally take for granted to a place where they can be experienced rather than simply happening. He speaks of his children, his wife, his experiences with love, from a place that on first blush seems very self-important. As each piece evolves, however, the listener is led to an understanding that it is the subject itself the poet finds important, not just his place in it.

Shihan was generally well-received by the crowd. One piece receiving particularly enthusiastic response was his "Negro Auction Network", where he compared the commercialization and marketing of the hip-hop culture to the sale of African slaves. In this piece, he even went so far as to point out the hypocrisy in his own field, lamenting the low expectations society has of black poets with the line; "...and no one will question him because at least it looks like he's trying."

Another poem that seemed to capture the audience was his closing poem, which he did not name. In this one, Shihan took the audience on a fanciful flight through time, chronicling the human experience of music from the first recognition of a heartbeat's tempo to the snappy flows made famous by artists like LL Cool J, even offering his very own "boast rap"; through a shy grin.

To find out more about Shihan, order his spoken word CD's, or talk to other people interested in Shihan and spoken word art, visit his website and forum at: www.shihansback.com.