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## Night&Day Father Figure

By Patrice Elizabeth Grell Yursik

Published: Thursday, September 8, 2005

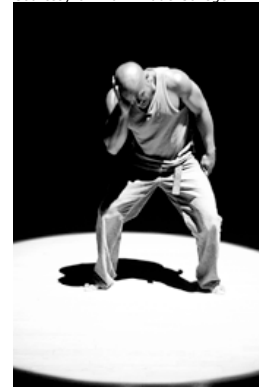
**Marc Bamuthi Joseph** has won four national poetry slams and appeared on HBO's *Def Poetry Jam*. He's been hailed by critics as being one of the most compelling and important spoken-word performance artists. But Bamuthi Joseph shrugs off the accolades. "My greatest achievement? It's being a father. No question," the artist says. His pride in parenthood informs his work and fuels his passion. ***Word Becomes Flesh***, the performance that has won Bamuthi Joseph overwhelming praise, is presented as a series of letters to his then-unborn child. Bamuthi Joseph isn't afraid to go places most artists haven't been before. "For young people in particular, it's brand-new for them to see an African-American man making himself vulnerable onstage," he says.

Bamuthi Joseph does more than merely address the theme of absentee fathers in the African-American community. Through his work with The Living Word Project -- the resident theater company of Youth Speaks, an organization emerging as the nation's leading spoken-word institute -- he's providing fatherlike guidance to classes of young poets. "Just as Shakespeare and Homer created poetry specifically to be performed, we're doing the same thing. Except we're informed by hip-hop culture, so the work is interdisciplinary, it's young, it's fast, and it has what we call narrative integrity," Bamuthi Joseph explains. His performances are at turns furious, tender, upbeat, and poignant. And while using his performance as pedagogy, he remains careful to not go the Bill Cosby route of pointing the finger at the African-American community. The poet explains, "I don't want to be didactic or dogmatic. We already have enough talking heads. I try to get folks to ask questions of themselves, and I think that's what gives the work its power."

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Courtesy of Miami Dade College



This papa's gonna preach

### Details

**Who / What:**

Marc Bamuthi Joseph

**Details:**

Marc Bamuthi Joseph's performance kicks off the 15th season of Miami Dade College's prestigious Cultura del Lobo series. See *Word Becomes Flesh* Saturday, September 10, at 8:30 p.m. Tickets range from \$10 to \$15. Call 305-237-3010, or visit [www.culture.mdc.edu](http://www.culture.mdc.edu).

**Where:**

the William and Joan Lehman Theater, 11380 NW 27th Ave, Miami

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