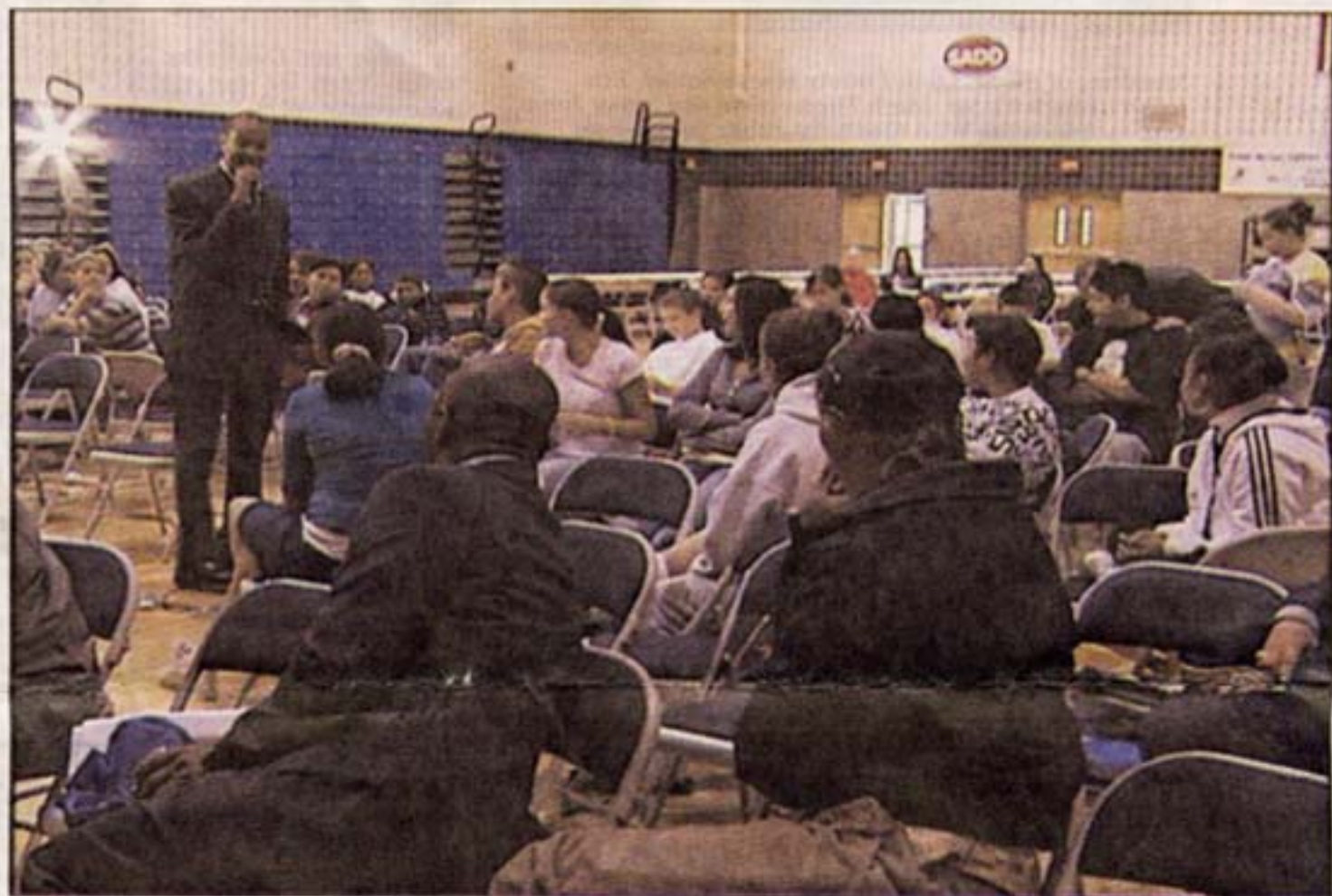


"When you see an image, question it."

LEON COLLINS, speaking at a festival about media stereotypes



CARRIE KOHLMEIER / FOX 21 NEWS

Kevin Powell of New York City speaks to students at Fond du Lac Ojibwe School about racial stereotypes in media.

Race on film: worth discussing

BY JANNA GOERDT
NEWS TRIBUNE STAFF WRITER

Twelve-year-old Anthony Fairbanks, a sixth-grade student at the Fond du Lac Ojibwe School on the Fond du Lac Indian Reservation, listens to hip-hop music sometimes, like a number of his friends.

On Thursday, Fairbanks and dozens of other Fond du Lac students took part in a film festival at the school designed to bring more awareness to how media stereotypes are created. Festival organizers want students to better understand how those stereotypes appear and how to start breaking them down.

The three-day event, which wraps up today, featured films and filmmakers as diverse as American Indian director Georgina Lightning, whose upcoming film "Older Than America" was partially filmed

around Cloquet, and Daphne Valerius, a black woman from Rhode Island. Her documentary, "The Souls of Black Girls," features actresses Regina King and Jada Pinkett Smith and explores how women of color are affected by media stereotypes of what is considered "beauty."

Anthony hadn't seen "The Souls of Black Girls" yet. But the film "Hip Hop: Beyond Beats and Rhymes" got him thinking about how women are portrayed in many rap music videos. And Anthony didn't like it.

"They are disrespectful to women," Anthony said. "They get treated like ... well, prostitutes."

He's still going to listen to hip-hop music, Anthony said. But will what he saw in "Hip Hop" change how he feels about the music videos he sees?

"A little bit," Anthony said.

Festival organizers say a little bit is sometimes all they'll get.

"We're sowing seeds," said festival co-chairman Leon Collins, director of the education and leadership programs for the Phelps Stokes Fund in Washington, D.C. Some of those seeds will blow away and never take root. But the films will get some students thinking, Collins said.

Maybe a student who listened to Lightning as she talked about her struggles to break through in the film industry will inspire them to tell their own story, Collins said. Or perhaps a student who sees "Bright Circle," a documentary about American Indian athletes in history — including Green Bay Packers quarterback Brett Favre, of the Mississippi band of Choctaw, and Jim Thorpe, the first president of the National Football League — will give a student the courage to stick with an athletic team, said filmmaker Shawn Kakuk.

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