

ROXBURY

The Boston Globe

Third book fair showcases African-American authors

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It was a do-it-yourself kind of day last weekend at the third Harlem Book Fair -- Roxbury. Authors lined the walkways of Roxbury Community College, selling books they have published themselves.

Self-publishing has been a hallmark of much of the publishing that gets done with African-American artists, said Lloyd King, who helped bring the fair to Boston from New York. "They have to take their own initiative," said King, adding that it is exciting that "so many of them are making the effort."

Poet Christina Vaughan of Boston, who described her 2006 book "Epiphany" and a 2001 collection as "my two babies that I birthed," said that after years of keeping poems in a box, she self-published because she wanted to learn the business side, "plus it's more feasible financially."

Keith Young, 39, of New York City turned up the charm to call one woman over to his table to learn about "Queen Bee," his novel of "love, lies, and loyalty." Impressed, she bought the book and its sequel, autographed.

While the published authors shared their wares outdoors, a writing workshop was held inside the college by the local organization Books of Hope, which aims to open doors for area teenagers. Director Soul Brown said the organization has published more than 100 books by 125 teenage authors since 1999. This spring's titles included "Pit Bull in a Skirt" and "A Cup of Truth with No Sugar, Please."

At the workshop, 13 youths wrote poems responding to the death of Liquarry Jefferson, the 8-year-old who was shot accidentally last month in his Roxbury apartment. The exercise transformed Abdi Warsame of Somerville, 15, from impatient to absorbed. He started off asking when the class would end and ended up writing past the last minute. He said he did not like writing until he joined Books of Hope two months ago.

Featured poet Askia Toure joined the teenagers, lending substance to King's hope that the festival would show youth "there are people that look like them that write."

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