

GIVE



PHOTO COURTESY OF SOFIA SNOW

POWER OF WORDS:
Sofia Snow uses spoken word to create change.

Millennials in Motion

In classrooms, on campus and around the city, community-service organizations and activities enable young people of color to make a difference **BY JESSICA STRONG AND JUDY DAHL**

OPPORTUNITIES TO GIVE BACK to the Madison area span cultural, professional and socio-political realms. Twenty-something organizers are using hip hop and spoken word to mobilize and engage youth, young professionals work hard to create networking and professional development opportunities, and sororities and fraternities band together to help diverse populations. Here are some of their inspiring stories.

An Emerging Emcee

The vessels of activism and community organizing run through Sofia Snow's veins—literally. As the daughter of a public school teacher and caseworker for homeless shelters, she witnessed firsthand the institutional injustices faced by poor communities of color. She credits that exposure with guiding her work today as an artist, educator and community organizer.

"I've been very aware of systems and how important it is to build relationships with people who are in charge of those systems and in power," says Snow, who was born and raised in Boston.

Today, she carries that insight with her as the education coordinator for UW–Madison's Office of Multicultural Arts Initiatives. OMAI administers the renowned First Wave Hip Hop and Urban Arts Learning Community, a multicultural student group comprised of young artists focused on urban arts, spoken word and hip-hop culture.

At eighteen, Snow entered UW–Madison on scholarship as a First Wave scholar. She performed around the world with the program, and in 2011 graduated with a degree in social work. She plans to attend graduate school and recently joined the Madison Arts Commission. "I never imagined myself [attending] a large institution like UW–Madison, but I quickly learned I could use the connections I made with professors and community leaders for my [work] as an activist."

After less than a year with OMAI, Snow has established herself as a powerful community organizer and emerging emcee. She organizes the annual summer program, Hip Hop in the Heartland, a weeklong institute that teaches educators and community leaders about engaging marginalized students. She also works to develop and maintain community engagement/outreach partnerships in greater Madison.

At just twenty-four years old, Snow has already shared stages with famous musicians and been honored as the top spoken word artist of the year. She has her own day in



Sofia Snow



The Delta Sigma Theta Sorority

PHOTO COURTESY OF DELTA SIGMA THETA

"I was given the chance to find and use my voice, and I want to create a safe space for others to do the same," says Sofia Snow.

Boston: Sofia Snow Day, February 28, which honors her artistry, community activism and advocacy for young women artists, work she began at age sixteen.

Her commitment continues here: Dane County's disproportionate incarceration rate for young men of color has haunted her through the years. "[Dane County] is a battleground," Snow says. "So being back in Madison and having the chance to address this issue means a lot to me.

"I was given the chance to find and use my voice, and I want to create a safe space for others to do the same," she says. "There's much work to be done."

Everyone's Welcome to Help

In the words of Nia Trammell, an administrative law judge for the State of Wisconsin and president of the Urban League of Greater Madison (ULGM) Young Professionals, the organization aims to "corral young people in the community and provide information about the

Urban League and how they can volunteer and prepare for leadership roles.

"We have two focuses: volunteerism and philanthropy," she adds. "We support the Urban League movement, help with its events, and raise money through membership dues and fundraising. As a new chapter chartered in 2012, our first significant fundraising activity is planned for March of 2014."

While her group's target membership base is ages twenty-one to forty-five, it's open to anyone with an interest in the Urban League and its mission. "We have members of many ethnicities and we welcome anyone who wants to help out," she says.

The ULGM Young Professionals support the League's three-point strategic empowerment agenda: Learn—education for youth, Work—careers for un/under-employed adults, and Live—stable home ownership for families.

In terms of diversity, "We take our cue from the League," says Trammell. "Some people assume it's strictly for African Americans, but our CEO, Kaleem Caire, takes a very open approach to membership and ours reflects that as well."

Her group helped with setup and acted as ambassadors during ULGM's One Madison community festival last September. "The League wanted to bring all types of people together to celebrate the South Madison community, and it was a great event," Trammell recalls, "We also go

spectrum profile

La Movida Radio and Voz Latina Newspaper



Luis and Lupita Montoto

into the community's schools, where many of us are mentors and tutors."

Trammell is very proud that her chapter has already successfully competed to obtain a \$4,000 grant from the National Urban League. "It supports the work [ULGM] does with the Scholars Academy, a mentoring program under the National Urban League umbrella."

During its annual National Day of Service, the ULGM Young Professionals used some of the grant money to bring an environmental awareness program to Madison's Badger Rock Middle School. "We presented the curriculum to the kids to make them aware of green initiatives and help them think about how they live their lives and ways they can help the environment," says Trammell.

"We're a young organization, and when people realize the impact we can have in the community, we'll only grow," she continues. "I believe our spring fundraiser will reach a broad spectrum of young professionals in the community."

Sisterhood for Service

In 2013, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. celebrated its one hundredth anniversary of service with a gathering of thousands in our nation's capital. A sisterhood of predominately African American college-educated women committed to public service throughout the world, the sorority began with twenty-two members at Howard University in Washington, D.C. Today it has one thousand student and alumnae chapters globally, including here in Madison.

India Anderson-Carter, president of the collegiate Zeta Xi Core Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority at UW-Madison, is humbled by the opportunity to serve the community and thankful for the support her chapter has received over the years. "Our many accomplishments wouldn't have been possible without it," she reflects.

The chapter's programs include the Delta Gems, Academy and Embodi groups, which work with middle- and high-school youth. "We also help senior citizens and volunteer at Porchlight, Inc. to help the less fortunate," says Anderson-Carter. "Our sorority serves a wide range of community segments."

Its current regional mandate focuses on providing education and outreach on domestic violence and diabetes. "Most recently our chapter hosted an event called 'Spike Out Diabetes,' where we registered volleyball teams for a tournament and

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IT'S NOT A RADIO STATION, IT'S A WAY OF LIFE

LUIS AND LUPITA MONTOTO PIONEERED South Central Wisconsin's Latino media scene, but it's about so much more than entertainment. Through La Movida 1480AM radio and Voz Latina Spanish Newspaper, the Montotos' mission is to inform and inspire both the Latino and non-Latino communities in the Madison area.

"We want our listeners to have fun and listen to great music, but it's more than that, we give them news, education, information," says Lupita. "We clarify misconceptions. We create awareness of the richness of Latino culture," Luis adds.

The Latino population in Southern Wisconsin is estimated at over 45,000, and Dane County is growing at a rate of 1,500 Latino residents per year. In addition to musical programming that spans Mexican and pop genres as well as talk radio, La Movida 1480AM seeks to address the spectrum of issues facing today's Latino community. In partnership with Mid-West Family Broadcasting since 2002, the radio station offers an authoritative voice on pertinent issues such as immigration, health care and cultural assimilation.

Since early June, La Movida has been simulcasting their programming to Northern Illinois through Rockford's 1330AM frequency, seeking to reach over 15-thousand Hispanics that live near the state line.

Luis, originally from Texas, and Lupita, from Mexico, married and moved to Wisconsin in the late '90s and founded La Movida Radio and Voz Latina Spanish Newspaper in 2000. Both perform on air and have been a dynamic force enriching the entire community.

"It's not just a radio station," says Luis. "It's a way of life."

"We want our listeners to have fun and listen to great music, but it's more than that, we give them news, education, information," says Lupita.

At a Glance

Name: La Movida Radio and Voz Latina Newspaper

Owners: Luis and Lupita Montoto

Years in Business: Since 2000

La Movida by the numbers: WLMV-AM, 5,000 Watts, 1480AM

Voz Latina by the numbers: 32,000 readers, bimonthly print

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