Home of the Brave

Spittin’ verses and high drama—a positive troupe’s ticket to healing

May 1, 2007 By James Wortman

On a Sunday night in January, the snow is piling up outside the Warehouse Theater in Washington, DC. Inside, though, the temperature—and the mood—is combustible. In a candlelit room, Monte J. Wolfe, a founding member of Brave Soul Collective (BSC), leads 30 people in an opening prayer. BSC has been meeting since February 2006, when Wolfe, an HIV positive, black, gay actor and musician, along with fellow positive musicians and artists Tim’m T. West and Erik Chambers, started a nondenominational support group for positive black men—and anyone in need of an artistic outlet. “I wanted to create a space where people could be real and talk about whatever is troubling them,” says Wolfe. “We were prophesying about the day when black gay men would support each other and not come from a place of judgment.” But open-forum, spiritual discussion groups were just the beginning; the founders’ artistic backgrounds sparked everything from open-mic nights promoting HIV/AIDS awareness to theater performances showcasing members’ talents. Last November, the group held an event called Brave Soul Unplugged, where members vented frustrations through drama and the mic.

“Our poetry and music tap into our truth,” says Wolfe, “and [helps] eradicate silence.”

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