

Word On Da Street Book Expo-se By: Michelle Cuttino

The Word on Da Street Book Expo was slated for Saturday, September 15, 2012 at the Underground Mall in Atlanta, GA. It was organized by Lisa Perry AKA Lisa Tyrell Perry-Amos of Word on Da Street Publishing.

The event description read: *"Word on Da Street Book Expo is gearing up for another event in Atlanta! In celebrating the authors of Word on Da Street family, this event will jump start a new movement of recognizing our African American writers and readers. With vendors, music, lovers of books, lovers of music, lovers of our people, mark the date now and prepare for an event you will be talking about for months afterwards."*

One thing is for certain, people *will* be talking about the Expo for months afterwards, but not for the reasons Lisa hoped for.

On Tuesday, September 18, 2012, Michael McGrew, President of Legacy Publishing Group LLC and author of *My Kinda Girl*, *Taking Losses* and *Room 111*, went viral to express his feelings about the book fair, which he labeled a "scam." Michael says he will soon be releasing a follow-up video, which will highlight the feedback he received from his initial recording.

Black Literature Magazine has the exclusive inside scoop direct from some of the authors showcased in the video, as well as an author who severed ties with Word on Da Street publishing early on. Here's what they had to say.

When asked what happened when he arrived at the Expo, Michael said, *"Authors were beginning to gather, the fair was supposed to begin at 1:00 pm and the coordinator [Lisa] didn't show until 1:30 pm looking disheveled, confused and agitated. She'd been complaining, I heard on Facebook blaming authors already for the mishap. Obviously blaming others for her lack of business ethic. By then it was close to 15 authors waiting on her to handle the problem, and being that she never paid for the section that totaled \$220, the section was closed. So what did she do? She turned around and asked the authors for \$30 apiece to cover the expenses that should have been paid prior to that day. I refused because that was not my obligation and commend the other authors who still paid for an opportunity to live out their dreams of selling their work. The coordinator stuck around, avoiding eye contact and when the money was accumulated and presented it was two hours past the deadline and by then the deal was off the table and the opportunity that authors anticipated for was gone. When asked to show proof of contract, the coordinator promised to come back in an effort to resolve the mess but the coordinator's amnesia must have kicked in because she never came back."*

Vytamin Voyce, author of *ANTE UP!* (www.vytaminvoyce2.com), says she paid for a table for the March Expo, but couldn't make it. Lisa then told her that she could come to

the September event instead. After asking for donations just so she could afford to make it to Atlanta, Vytamin Voyce was "disappointed that Lisa was very unprofessional." She traveled all the way from South Jersey just to find out that Lisa never paid Underground and never signed a contract. "Not to mention", she continued, "she charged twenty dollars the night before for our Meet & Greet, which included a buffet which we never seen. This is a lesson learned, but I am still grateful I came and I met some GREAT authors and am looking forward to working with them in the future."

Latony Crumble, author of *Just Wasn't My Time*, said he heard about the expo through a friend on Facebook. He paid for his table and arrived to find "nothing... We all stood waiting for some answers." Unlike most of the other authors, he hasn't been contacted by Lisa since the event, and would like to tell her, "Lady, give me my money NOW." His advice to fellow authors is to "stay away from people like Lisa... Be careful of people doing bad business... Lisa is a fraud."

"She claims it was wrongdoing on the Underground Mall's behalf," says Mocha C, author of the urban romance novel, *Stripped*. "If you call the Underground Mall and speak to Michelle or Mandy, they will tell you Lisa never paid to have the event. Michelle gave her until 4:00 pm on Friday, September 14th to pay \$220... she never showed up." The day of the event when the Underground Mall requested a copy of the contract, Mocha C. says that Lisa left to retrieve it and then sent "texts to the authors and asked for a fax number and [the Underground Mall] said no faxing. They wanted her to return with the contract in hand." Mocha C. went on to say that she and Vytamin Voice were one of the last authors to leave and Lisa never returned or answered her phone. "My message to Lisa is to get help, every dog has their day. Thank you Michelle for allowing me to express myself in *Black Literature Magazine*. Although I lost a lot of funds participating in the *Word on Da Street Expo*, it was a learning lesson and I had the opportunity to meet and connect with other authors."

J. Robinson, author of *Jazz Lady* and *Angel's Pride*, who was initially approached by Lisa to publish with *Word on Da Street*, says, "The woman is a con-woman". J. Robinson wasn't a part of the Expo, but worked directly with Lisa when self-publishing her debut novel, *Jazz Lady*. When asked about her experience with Lisa, she said, "I learned and I'm still learning, but she taught me to NEVER trust a fast talker... Should have known better because she found me and was calling me every single day all day. Publishers don't have that much time on their hands." J. Robinson says she split with Lisa when the formatted copy of her book was returned to her without any editing and Lisa explained that she not only sent the wrong copy to be printed, but also wanted J. Robinson to pay the additional fees the publisher was charging and Lisa would pay her back. "Time to go", was her response.

I contacted Lisa directly to hear her side of the story, but our discussion touched on other personal issues and not so much the book fair. Her one comment about the fair was, "I would never hurt anyone... or do anyone wrong." We are awaiting Lisa's response and will keep you posted upon receipt.

Only one of the authors I spoke to received a full refund, all others are out of their event fees, travel expenses and marketing/promotion budget. Although discouraged and upset over the outcome of this event, each used it as a learning experience and utilized the time to network and still get the word out about their novels.

Here is Michael's video. Draw your own conclusions and let us know what is your Word on Da Street?

<http://youtu.be/e48Ntx3h-1M>