



Spoken word artist Mel Vee hopes to see more funding going towards artists of colour who want to explore their unique experiences. MARY GETANEH/STARMETRO CALGARY

'Being a Black woman is fraught'

Spoken word artist debuts mixed multimedia project that highlights stories of Black womanhood from seven Calgarian women



MARY GETANEH
STARMETRO CALGARY

Spoken word artist Mel Vee has spent years thinking about what it means to be a Black woman in Calgary.

The thought took root in elementary school, when she and her peers would take note that her tight, coiled, locks were not as common, or favoured, in the sea of silky blond and brown stands on the playground.

But she didn't find a way to verbalize how she felt being a Black woman until her late teens, when she picked up a copy of *Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology* and had what she describes as the "most powerful experience" she's ever had.

"People don't want to talk about being Black here, there's a way we kind of tip toe around it and are very uncomfortable on owning our Blackness," said Mel Vee.

"Being born and raised here, I'm still going to be a product of my culture. I'm still a country girl deep down, but people don't think of Black women in that way."

On Friday she debuted her newest project, *De Mule Ah De World*, at the Community-Wise Resource Centre.

The project wove together spoken word performances about the heartaches and joys of Black womanhood and portraits of seven different Black women in the city.

"There's this ugly caricature of us being emasculating and aggressive and over sexualized," she said.

"So, I wanted to bring that tenderness and that nuance back into the experience of Black womanhood and not just have the caricature."

She said she wanted to photograph the women with whom she spoke so onlookers would have to stop and look the women in the eyes.

"I want people to think critically about how these women are being seen and how they're being represented," Mel Vee said.

Find out what some of the project's participants had to say. Full story at thestar.com/calgary

Nietzsche, Nicole and a number: How a mass email brought more than 240 women together



EVAN RADFORD
STARMETRO CALGARY

By all accounts, a new network of Nicoles can trace its starting point to Nietzsche, a number and a woman named Nicole from the Netherlands.

It started as one man's attempt to track down a Dutch exchange student he met at a University of Calgary

pub Thursday night.

U of C student Carlos Zetina was reportedly at the campus pub The Den, where he met the original Nicole, on exchange from the Netherlands.

She gave him her phone number.

It didn't work when he tried calling her.

Then Zetina resorted to a very specific approach: Email everyone with U of C email

accounts and all variants of the name Nicole in them.

By 11 a.m. Friday, PhD candidate Nicolette Little was one of 246 people who had a message in her inbox, sent by Carlos Zetina, with the following subject line: "Met you last night and you gave me the wrong number."

In the message he admits it's a "mass email to all Nicole's (sic)" and "if you are the one and just don't want to

talk to me that's ok as well."

He writes, "If you (sic) name is Nicole and you're from Holland and you think Nietzsche is depressing then text me," followed by his phone number. "I'm Carlos btw I'm the guy who took you and your friend home last night."

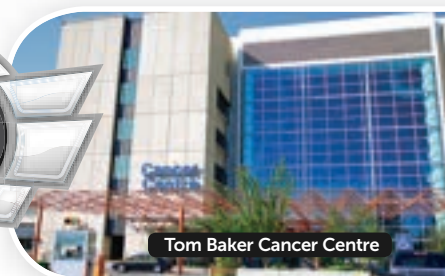
Horde of Nicoles organize meet-ups for like-named women at U of C. Read more at thestar.com/calgary



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