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FEBRUARY 21, 2013— VOL. 48, NO 29

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OrigiNation celebrates youth empowerment at fundraiser

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Actor Terrence Howard poses with young dancers from OrigiNation prior to their performance at Twist & Shout last week. The fundraising event was held at Roxbury Community College's Main Stage Theater. (Tony Irving photos)

Jacquinn Williams

The OrigiNation Cultural Arts Center celebrated 18 years of developing and empowering youth and the Boston community through performance at their fundraiser, Twist & Shout, last Saturday with special guest actor Terrence Howard.

OrigiNation was founded in 1994 by Creative Director Shaumba-Yandje Dibinga, who wanted to create a space where kids could dance, learn about themselves and have a good time. And she succeeded.

During the show, the young dancers hopped, shimmied and leapt through the air as they performed a dizzying number of routines set to music from artists including India Arie, Fela Kuti and Babatunde Olutunji.

"Five, six, seven, eight," Development Director Muadi Dibinga shouted while Shaumba-Yandje urged them to "bow together."

"Clap once if you can hear me," they all alternately shouted to gain the attention of the kids.



Terrence Howard is joined by Shaumba-Yandje Dibinga, founder of OrigiNation Cultural Arts Center, at the VIP reception prior to the organization's show Twist & Shout.

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Some emotionally-charged performances included "110 Stories" and a poem called "The Love that Hate Produced" by Omekongo Dibinga that highlighted the tragedies and triumphs of black people.

Earlier that evening, Howard, who starred in movies like "The Best Man," "Ray" and "Hustle & Flow," talked to the youth about everything from the importance of knowing your past so that you can inform your future to the ways that movement creates colors and sounds in the universe.

The blue-eyed actor was intense as he shared two songs with the group: A song he wrote titled "Come Away with Me," and a Brazilian song that he sang in Portuguese while strumming his guitar.

Howard was just in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil and told the kids that learning a native song when you travel helps one to understand the language better. The talented actor, who was being honored that night, took every opportunity throughout the evening to sing and play with and for the children in attendance.

Howard put it best when he told the kids before their performance, "We are unaware of our power."

For more information on Origination, visit www.originationinc.org.

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