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In 2004, *Wonkette*, the D.C. gossip blog, reported that MTV had bought a house for a supposed Washington season of *The Real World*. The notion was thoroughly mocked, then abandoned. Since then, MTV returned to L.A. (for a second time) and New York (for a third) -- even anointing Key West and Las Vegas worthier locales than the nation's capital. Smart people have always come to D.C. But the smart cool ones? No. The saying was "D.C. is Hollywood for ugly people," the bland leading the bland. Now, change -- and *The Real World* -- has come to Washington (and the real world).

Busboys & Poets throbs as the city's Berkeley-in-a-box café; the phrase "Let America be America again / Let it be the dream it used to be" is etched on a mural there. It's the opposite of Smith Point, the guest-list-only Georgetown boîte popular during the Bush era with the polos-and-pearls country club crowd (the Bush twins were regulars). The Obama model of art-of-the-possible civic energy is amplified by a White House stacked with the most fuckable intellectuals since *The West Wing*. But D.C. also has its youngest-ever mayor, Adrian Fenty, a suave fedora-sporting triathlete who was elected at 35. "This is a resilient city," Fenty, a native son, said during a recent 5:30 a.m. run, steam rising from his pecs. "Our energy has returned."

The Creators: Daniel Phoenix Singh, president/artistic director, Dakshina Dance Company; Sabri Ben-Achour, sculptor; Michael Dumlao, founder, Fashion Fights Poverty; Drew Porterfield, curator/director, Long View Gallery; Hugh McElroy, founder, Ruffian Records