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steppin' out



Judith Barrington bangs a gong Monday, Feb. 27, at Pioneer Courthouse Square, in remembrance of those who have died of AIDS. She joined other community leaders, including former Gov. Barbara Roberts and Lawrence Dark, president of the Urban League of Portland, at the noon-hour event.

PHOTO BY LINDA KLEWER

guest editorial

Sharing history

Black History Month provides greater appreciation for Brother to Brother

by Rupert Kinnard

Well, Black History Month 1995 is now officially over. The yearly debate about whether one month or every month of the year should be used to celebrate the accomplishments of African Americans in this country has slowly died down. It also has become increasingly popular these days for a cross-section of people to question the validity of exploring history—and conveniently black history seems to be that aspect of history most worth ignoring. Most conservatives (and many not-so-conservatives) don't want to acknowledge that what has occurred in the past is responsible for where we are today, and many younger people—bored by history—groan at the mere mention of the civil rights movement of the '60s.

I had the honor of participating in Reed College's Black History Month program and was able to attend a number of related events during February. One of the historical highlights of the month for me was the televised series *The Promised Land*, which chronicled the migration of African Americans from Mississippi to Chicago. Since my parents traveled this route in the early 1950s, this bit of history was very personal for me. But some of the more rewarding events I attended during this year's Black History Month were made even more exciting by sharing them with members of Brother to Brother, the Portland chapter of the African American gay and bisexual men's group. I never want to take for granted how wonderful it is to spend time with a group of men who respect a sense of shared history. We actually come from different backgrounds, in many ways, but there is a connectedness surrounding the shared history of all of us as African American gay and bisexual men. I'm constantly amazed, despite the things we do have in common, at how different our

perceptions and perspectives can be from one another. A group of Brother to Brother members gathered recently at the Lloyd Cinemas to see *Hoop Dreams* and shared varied and enlightening observations about this very complex four-year look into the lives of two Chicago African American families. We also attended the Portland premiere of Marlon Riggs' last film, *Black Is, Black Ain't*, at Reed College. I found the film dizzying in its attempt to cover an amazing spectrum of African American life and how we experience what it means to be black in this country. Once again it was rewarding to share with members of the group the parts of the film that affected us the most.

As we members of Brother to Brother continue to develop our connection with one another, I find a growing respect for each and every opinion that comes from a well-thought-out point of view, even if it differs from my own. It is fascinating to learn the history of an individual and understand how such information plays such a crucial part in the opinions we develop as adults. In the queer community, there is also a lot to be gained when we connect with others who share not only our sexual orientation, but our gender, racial and cultural background. It helps us develop insightful perspectives which can help us lead more fulfilling lives.

In every other issue, *Just Out* lists groups which cater to the extensive diversity of our community, and I encourage readers to explore the possibilities. And as for Brother to Brother, I would like to extend a heartfelt thanks to core group members Ron W., Ron Y., Brian P., Cecil P., Jonathan H., Reggie P., Mark L. and last, but not least, Cliff J., for their continued commitment and energy. It is wonderful to share being a part of history in the making.

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