

### Coalition of Black men cont: Black community awed by turnout-

At a signal from their leaders, they marched out into Alberta street in a determined effort to re-establish control over the community in which they live. Like the great African warriors from whom they descended, the Coalition of Black Men rallied behind their standard bearer and marched to the ominous cadence of the drum set by Art Alexander. Halim Rahsaan harked the battle cry, "Here we come, Black community! Stop the gangs. Push crack back. Youth involvement. We need you. The time has come. Forward together. Backward never. It's time to unite. Don't be afraid!"

Bonnie, a large black watchdog, marched along with his master, Bruce Watts who said, "I am a social worker and everyday I observe the very negative influences which surround the Black youths of our community. Each time they walk out onto the streets they encounter pimps, hustlers and pushers. We are here today to show them that there are other alternatives."

Karim Davis, a seven year old, marched along with his father Waverly who said, "My Saturdays normally are spent with my son. This is a very special occasion. If our appearance will contribute to a difference, then the time will have been well spent."

At Alberta and Rodney more Black men joined the group as their women applauded the effort to save the community. Bonnie Holiday urged them on, "Right on!" This is exactly what we need." By the time the army of warriors had reached Alberta and Vancouver streets this battle cry had sparked a determined momentum. Someone called for a musical rhythm and to the beat of the drum more than 600 hundred hands came together in unison and created a sound that reverberated off the walls of the surrounding buildings like thunder. This in turn seemed to have a galvanic response on the determination of the marchers.

Albany Disciple took up the battle cry as he shouted the chants that would take the army all the way to their destination at Unthank Park. Ben Priestley marched along with his sons, Ayinde & Omari. Mr. Priestley said, "The North, Northeast communities always have been a special concern of mine. It is high time that the larger community views us in a positive light."

Alfred Richardson agreed, "Black men need to start communicating together about the problems of our youths rather than focusing solely on sports. This demonstration is something positive."

By the time the marchers had advanced to the A.M.E. Zion church at Vancouver and Skidmore Streets, the cheering onlookers had increased in numbers. Parishioners poured out of the edifice and greeted the men with smiles and spontaneous applause.

Their battle cry had reached a compelling crescendo, "Don't be afraid to unite! You are never too old. You are never too young to stand up and be counted."

Ron Lewis said, "I am here to demonstrate my support for the many problems which undermine our community. As Black men we must display positive role models. We simply must stop the increased influx of gang activity. We must insure that they will not be able to recruit new members from among our impressionable Black youths. We must initiate programs to involve our young Black youths not only in sports but also in nature studies, cultural awareness and any other effort that will assist them in building a positive image of themselves."

Under the roof of the Unthank Park pavilion, the victorious marchers were joined by Black women in a resounding cheer and then they all sang the Black National Anthem.

In his keynote address, the Rev. Dr. James Martin, spokesperson for the group, stated that the march had been made to express the concerns and desires of the Black community. He indicated a need to increase education, to



10:00 a.m. in the King Neighborhood Facility at 4815 N.E. Seventh near Alberta.

After arriving at the park, there were wives and family members anxiously awaiting the arrival of the marchers.

There was a group of conga players assembled in the park who increased the excitement, which had already filled the air, with their pulsating and rhythmic beat. The beat quickened and proclaimed the arrival of the meritorious group.

Other speakers included Commissioner Dick Bogle who observed that in the near 60 years that he has lived in Portland he had never witnessed such a positive demonstration in support of the Black community.

Aleem Shabazz from the Coalition of Black Men underscored the importance of returning the Black community to the real citizens and the higher ideals for which they always have strived.

Useni Perkins, one of the founders, concluded the major presentations by reading one of his original poems, *Do You Dig, Brother?* It expounded upon the efforts generations of Black men have directed toward attaining the essence of manhood. The poem ends with the admonition, "You had better dig, man or dig your own Black grave."

The Rev. John Parker concluded the convocation with inspirational words and sealed the bond of fellowship with a traditional joining of hands symbolic of the all important interactions that link the men and women of the community together in an unbroken chain.

The Black Coalition of Men will convene in a special fellowship following the next regular meeting on Saturday, July 23rd, at

The conga players are members of a drum class that uses the Yaun Child Care, Inc. located at the Mallory Avenue Community Christian Church for their lessons. The instructor is Caton Lyles and his students are David Arkinson, Isaac Stevenson, and Richard Steward. Mr. Lyles said, "I decided that we should perform here today to give the students an opportunity to become involved in a community activity. I wanted them to make a positive statement. This is their contribution."

I spoke to one of the students, David Arkinson, and discovered that there was a driving force behind and within David. Here are his words, "I really concerned

about what Martin Luther King did. Right? I always tell the kids at Yaun to look up to the adults. I feel that I can become a civil rights leader because I used to be a BLOOD myself. I've lived on the streets of Portland and have been a gang member since I was 9-years-old. I am 16-years-old now and I feel that I can make a difference when I grow up. I want to change this and make this place better — because it ain't giving us no \_\_\_\_\_ these people just don't know about us. I know how kids are dealing with this problem right now because they are going around saying stuff like that 'Oh, nobody cares' and they want all that chains — and stuff like that and getting into gangs, people getting shot and everything. BUT, its not doing nothing but messin' up the community. What I'm saying is — I can't explain right now how I really feel because there are times when I sit back and I think about everything. Ya' know? Like the time that's in my head. I think about my past. Ya' know? So, I'm just getting all confused and I feel like messing up everything, too.

I make a living. Ya' know? I'm a graphic artist. I'm, also, a drug and alcohol counselor at Marshall High School and I have been for two years. I help others to know about drugs because I had a heart attack last year. Suicidal; but, I got back to life in the hospital. I took 'Angel Dust' when I was so mad. Ya' know? I have a lot of things going for me now."

If David continues on the road he is now on, he is sure to make a positive impact upon the community.

Such a young life; but, he has aged by the grim experiences.

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## Do You Dig Brother

by Useni Eugene Perkins

Do you dig brother  
 Do you dig dig dig  
 Do you dig brother  
 Do you dig dig dig  
 Do you dig brother a new world  
 fertile with black concepts/  
 celebrating the tombs of ancient  
 warriors/and kingdoms which shine  
 like night stars/praising blackness  
 with ju ju spirits  
 affirming truth  
 dig dig dig  
 dig dig dig

Do you dig softness/the skin of a black  
 sister/resting against your wounds/wounds  
 of battle and victory/beautiful black sisters  
 helping brothers to  
 build black nations  
 dig dig dig  
 dig dig dig

Do you dig brother  
 revolutionary sounds/screaming  
 from the souls of COLTRANE's disciples/  
 composing black symphonies for our  
 mothers/sisters/daughters/  
 natural as they are/can be/  
 will be/must be/  
 naturally be/  
 Do you dig brother  
 a generation of black men/being men/  
 acting as men/fighting men/men who are  
 men/want to be men/to help give birth  
 to new men/who will be the sons  
 of real men/  
 dig dig dig  
 dig dig dig

Do you dig brother  
 the spirit of PRINCE MALCOLM giving you direction/  
 a fulfillment of purpose/love for another  
 brother/negro brothers/colored brothers/  
 afro-american brothers/black  
 brothers/african brothers/third  
 world brothers/becoming real  
 brothers/to each other/for each  
 other/to save each other/  
 dig dig dig  
 dig dig dig

Do you dig brother  
 the voice of RAY CHARLES bursting into  
 a night song/screaming with love/and  
 tears/to make your heart cry out  
 YESTERDAY/and feel good  
 so good/too good/  
 be good/is good/  
 Do you dig brother  
 the energy of your soul/transmitting  
 blackness/and the blues/the energy given  
 you by blackness/to transcend/transcend/  
 counteract/attack/attack/attack/counteract/  
 Do you dig brother  
 together/we as a nation  
 a black nation/with songs  
 for our women  
 together/understanding/aware  
 of the enemy who  
 lurks in our minds  
 Do you dig brother  
 for if you don't you better dig  
 your own black grave

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