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 reestablish 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 soley on sports. This demonstration is something positive."

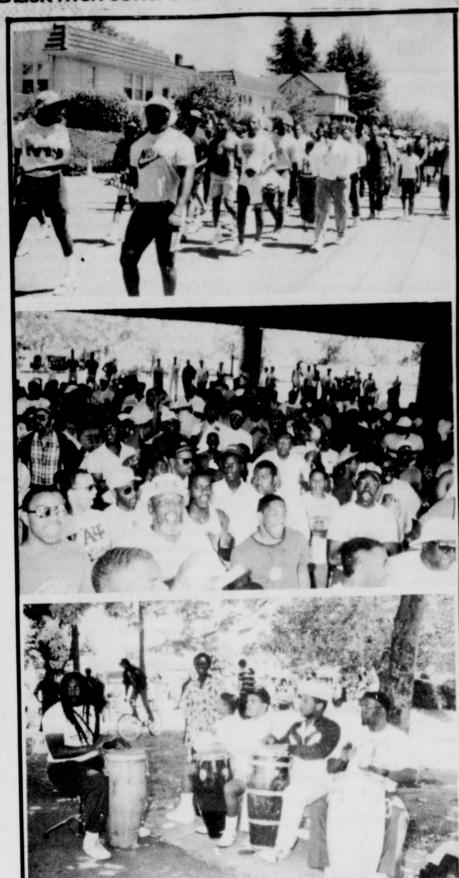
By the time the marchers had advanced to the A.M.E. Zion church at Vancouver and Skidmore Streets, the cheering onlookers had increased in numbers. Parishioners poured out of the edifice and greeted the men with smiles and spontaneous applause.

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



mend broken families and to reduce poverty. By so doing, Dr. Martin predicted that the lack of hope would be eliminated. He also, emphasized the importance of embracing the great African tradition in which the elders of the community establish their authority and serve as teachers and role models for the developing youths.

Dr. Martin said, "Before we can ask for help from the outside community we must first establish that we are worthy of such help. We must pull ourselves up by our own bootstraps. The gang problem is our problem. The drug problem is our problem. Before we can serve as role models for our youths we must examine our own lifestyles and make whatever adjustments that are necessary. And even though there are many problems within the Black community we must also recognize the unlimited opportunities that exist with regard to education, business and employment. We must plan for many victories. This is only a beginning. We will make people want to get involved with revitalizing this our community."

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 Shabaaz 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

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

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 rhythmical beat. The beat quickened and proclaimed the arrival of the meritorious group.

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 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 say-

ing 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

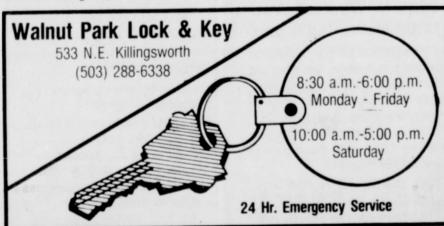
just getting all confused and I feel

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

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.

mad. Ya' know? I have a lot of

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

> 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/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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