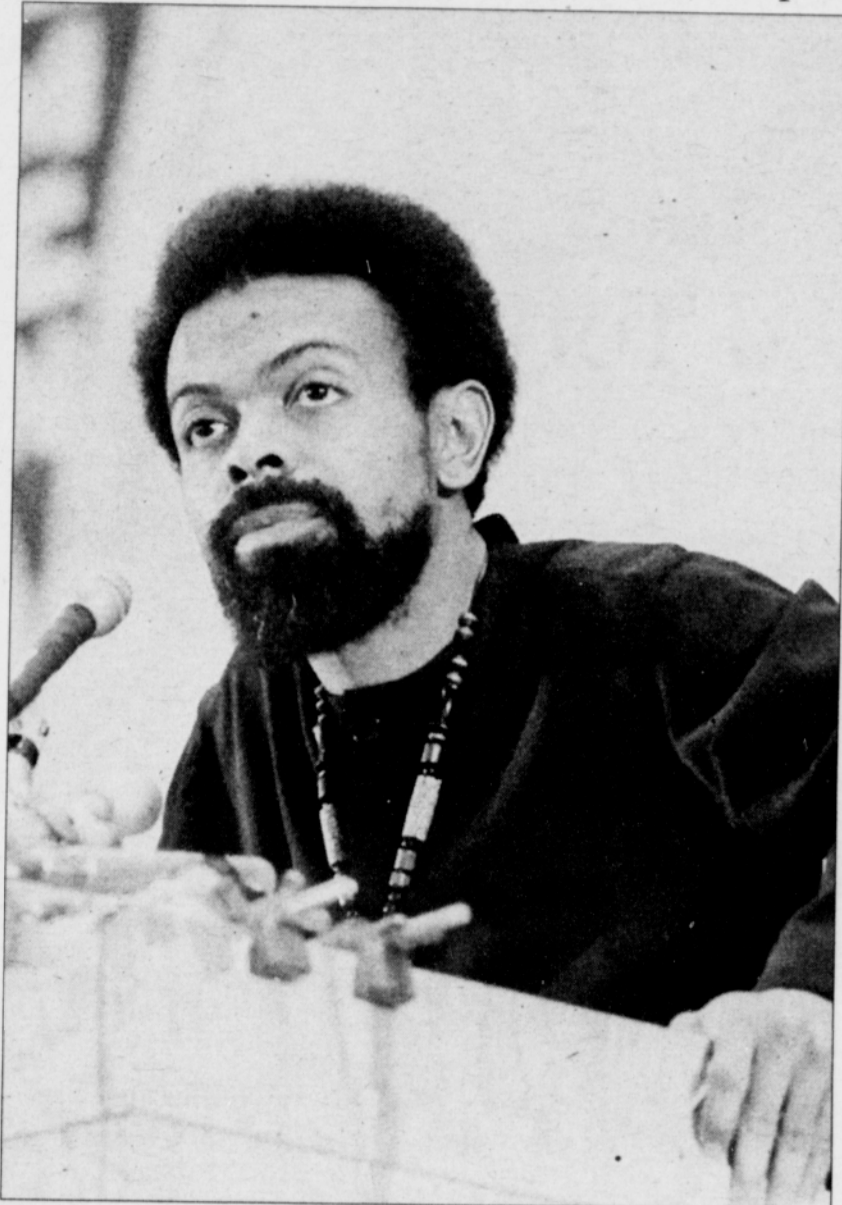


Agitator was a Tireless Force in American Culture

Man of letters inspired generations

(AP)-- Amiri Baraka, the militant man of letters and tireless agitator whose blues-based, fist-shaking poems, plays and criticism made him a pro-



Poet and social activist Imamu Amear Baraka speaks during the Black Political Convention in Gary, Ind., in 1972. (AP photo)

vocative and groundbreaking force in American culture, died Thursday in his hometown of Newark, N.J. He was 79.

Perhaps no writer of the 1960s and '70s was more radical or polarizing than the former LeRoi Jones, and no one did more to extend the political debates of the civil rights era to the world of the arts.

He inspired at least one generation of poets, playwrights and musicians, and his immersion in spoken word traditions and raw street language anticipated rap, hip-hop and slam poetry. The FBI feared him to the point of flattery, identifying Baraka as "the person who will probably emerge as the leader of the Pan-African movement in the United States."

Baraka transformed from the rare black to join the Beat caravan of Allen Ginsberg and Jack Kerouac to leader of the Black Arts Movement, an ally of the Black Power movement that rejected the liberal optimism of the early '60s and intensified a divide over how and whether the black artist should take on social issues.

Scorning art for art's sake and the pursuit of black-white unity, Barak was part of a philosophy that called for the teaching of black art and history and producing works that bluntly called for revolution.

"We want 'poems that kill,'" Baraka wrote in his landmark "Black Art," a manifesto published in 1965, the year he helped found the Black Arts Movement. "Assassin poems. Poems that shoot guns/Poems that wrestle cops into alleys/and take

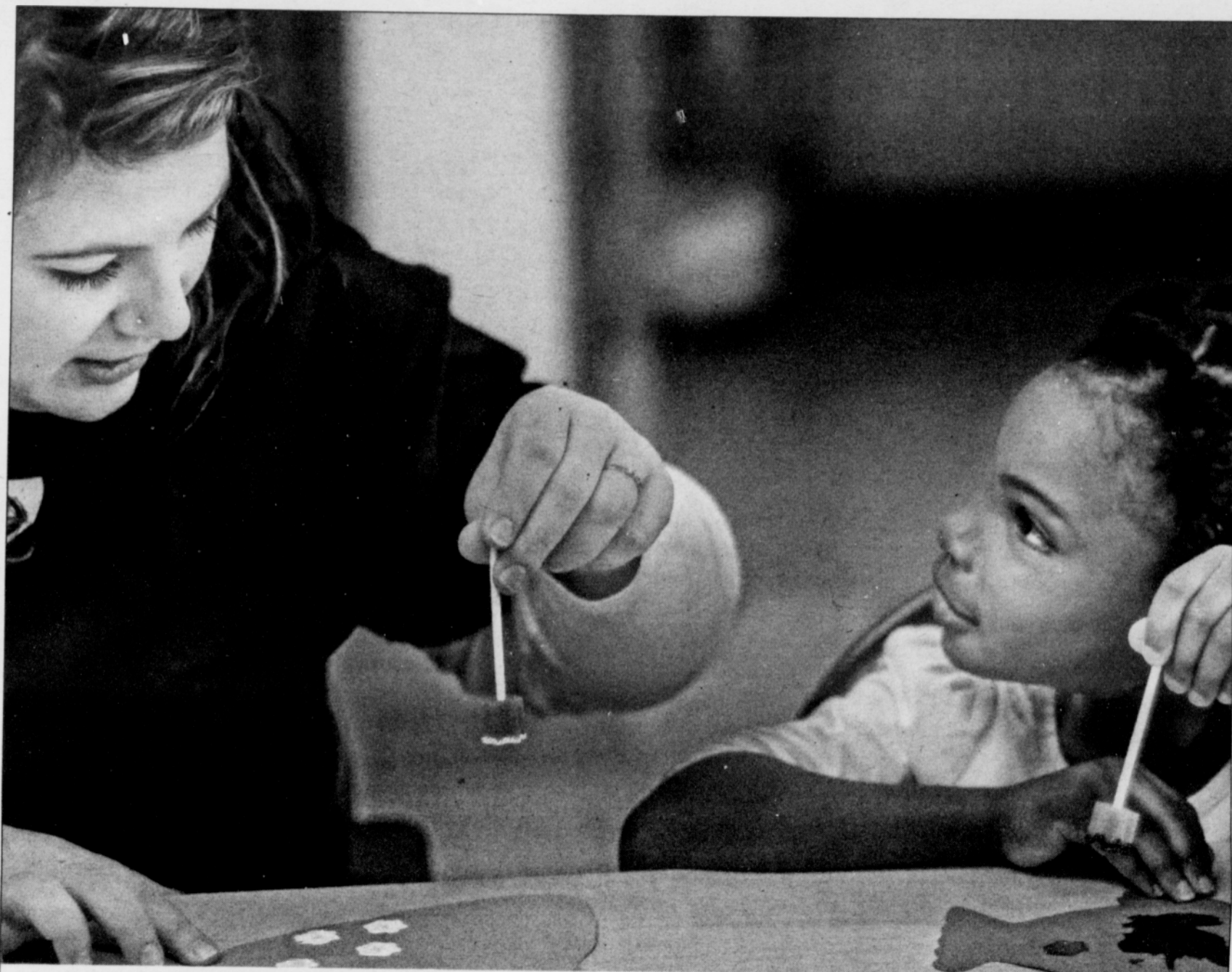
their weapons leaving them dead/with tongues pulled out and sent to Ireland."

He was as eclectic as he was prolific: His influences ranged from Ray Bradbury and Mao Zedong to Ginsberg and John Coltrane. Baraka wrote poems, short stories, novels, essays, plays, musical

and cultural criticism and jazz operas. His 1963 book "Blues People" has been called the first major history of black music to be written by an African-American.

A line from his poem "Black People!" — "Up

continued ▼ *on page 22*



Kaiser Permanente employees partner with Innovative Services NW to help kids and adults in our community.

when we come together, dreams come true

Martin Luther King Jr.'s dream burns brightly in hundreds of Kaiser Permanente employees. On January 20, we honor his legacy by volunteering to make our communities healthier. We'll lend a hand at local schools and shelters. We'll plant trees and provide health and dental care to low-income, uninsured adults. And we'll pause to reflect on Dr. King's message of service, equality, and community.

"Life's most persistent and urgent question is: What are you doing for others?"
 — Martin Luther King, Jr.

KAISER PERMANENTE® **thrive**

©2013 Kaiser Foundation Health Plan of the Northwest