



*Black History Month comes alive with 'Who I Am Celebrating Me,' a stage performance centered on identity, culture and the lived experiences of African Americans from Portland's World Stage Theater. This is the first year the play is part of an expanded Black History Festival NW, with performances Feb. 11-12 at the World Trade Center, downtown, at area schools and other locations, along with other Black History events all month long.*

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World Stage Theatre, a multi-cultural local organization committed to performances that inspire social reflection, hosts its first annual Black History Festival NW this month.

The main event is a stage performance centered on identity, culture, and the lived experiences of African Americans, entitled, "Who I Am Celebrating Me." The play is written by Shalanda Sims of Portland, the festival's founder and artistic director.

Who I Am is now in its 12 season, and the festival is an expansion of World Stage Theater's

# Who We Are

## Black History Festival puts focus on culture, identity

work in engaging the community with black history.

"We've always known we wanted to do something bigger than the play to engage the broader community, but we didn't have the funds in the beginning," Sims said.

A \$25,000 place making grant, however, from Metro was awarded

to the group recently allowing it to expand their mission of reaching a larger audience, and thus creating Black History Festival NW.

Sims wanted to take advantage of the entire month to focus on black history. In addition to the play, scheduled Feb. 11-12 at the World Trade Center, downtown, and at local schools, the festival

features various events centered on African American history and culture throughout the month in different areas of Portland.

The events include a scavenger hunt for the entire month, a book fair with the Black Parent Initiative on Saturday, Feb. 10 at Barnes and Noble in Clackamas, a game night at Jefferson High School on

Feb 17, and a Black History Unity Gala at Self Enhancement, Inc., featuring ESPN correspondent Jemele Hill as the keynote speaker, on Feb. 24.

Recognizing black history and culture in Oregon is important to Sims for many reasons, a main one being a response to the state's own history of excluding African Americans.

Laws that explicitly forbade the black population from residing in Oregon since its founding in 1859 were not repealed until the mid 1920's. During the World War II era, a large number of African

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