



MacLaren youth lead celebration of Black History Month



Travon M. presented as part of MacLaren's celebration.

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Several Oregon Youth Authority close-custody facilities held celebrations in February in honor of Black History Month, including Eastern Oregon, Hillcrest, MacLaren, North Coast, and Tillamook.

At MacLaren, the celebration on February 27 was youth-driven. Topics of discussion included the 1712 Willie Lynch letter on slavery and its relevant today; hip-hop and its effects on youth; education and its importance to our community and the direction of the human race; and the late rapper Tupac Shakur's contributions to black lives through his music and political beliefs.

MacLaren youth wrote and performed two songs: "All Lives Matter" by Travon M. and Warith M., and "Trail Blazing" by Warith M. The songs contained two main messages: that regardless of life's obstacles, you must persevere and continue to move forward; and it's not what happens to you that matters, it's what you do after that makes the difference.



Attendees enjoyed a meal of chicken, collard greens, sweet potatoes, macaroni and cheese, green salad, and cornbread.



Michael Green, a.k.a. Easy MCcoy, performed at the event. A former MacLaren youth, Green now is a well-known musician in the Northwest.

The facility also had a slideshow presentation depicting African American icons from the past and present, and a Family Feud-style trivia game where community guests and youth answered questions about black history, movies, athletics, and music.

We also were blessed by visits from two former MacLaren residents who are now well-known musicians in the Pacific Northwest. Michael Greene (Easy MCcoy) and Ahmad Richards (6IX), who once were in the same place as the youth in the audience, were able to share their stories and talk about how they navigate through their world with vision and purpose. They told the youth that they surround themselves with like-minded individuals who uplift them and support them in all they do.



Warith M. performed a song he wrote for the event.



Ahmad Richards, another former MacLaren resident, has become a well-known musician under the name 6IX.