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Black History Month 2008 Pays Tribute to Mentors, Martyrs and the Muse



***This Is Why:*** The Metro Choir fills the rafters with remembrance, inspiration and celebration in a musical program of Gospel Music and Spirituals punctuated with spoken word remembrances of U.S. Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall (Richard Chastang, Esq.) Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. (DonCosta Seawell) and Malcolm X (Keith Hanson) and a spirited tribute to the presidential candidacy of U.S. Senator Barack Obama (Tahir Davis).



The literary salon presented by the African American Employees Association (AAEA) on Feb. 28 featured actress and author Denise Nicholas and honoree County Supervisor Yvonne Burke. The author led the applause when Supervisor Burke entered the room and later presented her with a copy of her first novel, "Freshwater Road."



Metro Board Member Supervisor Yvonne Burke dashed in from the board meeting down the hall to say hello and delivered an inspirational message to a grateful gathering. AAEA charter member and co-founder Rick Owens presented Supervisor Burke with an artful orchid plant, signifying her unending support and participation in AAEA activities. AAEA was founded in 1993.



George B. Parks, Esq., took top honors at the Metro Choir celebration Feb. 27. The semi-retired jurist has been an active member of the Metro Choir since 2003. In the courthouse and on the basketball court, George Parks is a living legend who played against an all-white Duke School of Medicine team as a starter for the North Carolina College for Negroes basketball team in the first integrated intercollegiate game played in American history. The year was 1944. Pictured are, from left, Choir Director Renee Willis, Edith Goff-Youngblood, Mr. Parks, Pat Clark and Choir Director DonCosta Seawell.



AAEA members all: From left, Keith Hanson, Susan Dove, Veronica Hargrove, Supervisor Yvonne Burke and Rick Owens. The group also hosted "Poet's Corner" on Feb. 14, in which eight poets and/or dramatists delivered their own work or interpretations of the written word.

Text and photos by Gayle Anderson