

ARTS & PERFORMANCE

Seeing the good one man can do

By Ty Burr

Heat of Stone is a heartbreaker, a documentary about an inner-city high school that shows how hard, how necessary, and how infinitely rewarding it can be to open doors for kids who didn't know they were there. Technically the movie's nothing much, but it makes the viewer forgive the Stone by Me! look that can't help but



Principal Ron Stone

consider it has job "to provide options" to the students of Weequahic High School in Newark.

MOVIE REVIEW

★★★ 1/2
HEART OF STONE

Directed by:
Beth Toni Kravant
Starring: Ron Stone
At: Museum of Fine Arts,
today and Saturdays 10:00
through Oct. 29
Running time: 84 minutes
Rated: (as PG-13) language,
discussions of gang violence

These these are peace-making leaders to their peers while forging respect and friendship between them. Watching "Heart of Stone" forms audience members to completely realize how when they think they know. For one thing, it was gang party as a positive force, providing at least some emotional support and community to young men whose fathers are long gone and who society pointedly ignores.

Gang life also kills these kids, obviously, not a student of Weequahic hasn't lost multiple acquaintances to bullets. Stone wants to take that lesson of self-respect and transfer it to the educational system and the world beyond, and because he talks straight at the students rather than down to them, they listen. He knows individual pride comes from school pride and makes the football coach to build a winning team in three years. (Really? OK, done.)

Director Beth Toni Kravant spends a lot of time speaking in Newark's heavy — one the obligatory names by Philip Roth, Weequahic class of 1950 and dining at the table with the old gang shows the list. One of the alumni is Hal Kauf, father of actor Zach Braff (who gets an executive producer credit here); another is the model for Russell Crowe's character in "American Gangster" and, in his own words, a "tough [expletive] Jew." They're all charming, and they all understand they're not the main order of business.

Getting Royce Johnson to be the main order of business. Trying to talk the boy into accepting an offer from Stone Hall, Stone tells him "People have asked you and you're still standing. What kind of fear can a schoolbook put in you?" And Royce still hesitates. That's how terrifying the world can seem when all you know is Newark.

"Heart of Stone" makes you realize the vast amount of good one person can do and the widening number of lives he can change for the better. If he thinks quietly shuddering eating is not what our has hoped for, neither is it hopeless. Rather, it's Ron Stone's challenge laid right at our feet.

Ty Burr can be reached at tyburr@globe.com. His latest column, see www.boston.com's education

"Not like any other film about a dedicated principal who tries to turn a failed high school around."

Neil Greenberg, THE NEW YORK TIMES

"Deftly structured, incisive and revealing."

—Tom Ivers, LA TIMES

"A penetrating documentary."

—Allan Rich, SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE

**Q & A
with Filmmaker
& Local Educators
West Newton: Sat., October 24
at 3:45 & 6:15pm**

HEART OF STONE

A FILM BY
BETH TONI KRAVANT

STARTS TODAY

WEST NEWTON
1298 WASHINGTON ST.
ROUTE 15
617-964-6000

**MUSEUM OF
FINE ARTS, BOSTON**
465 HUNTINGTON AVE.
617-360-3303

DAILY 1:25, 3:45, 6:15 & 8:25pm FR. 4, SA, 12, SU, 10:30am TH, 5