

# Midwives Share Experiences Supporting Women

## Healers to Connect at PSU

BY JAYMEE R. CUTI

THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

From hair care to healthcare, alternative medicine and natural cures have become very trendy. Some say household remedies are more affordable. Others like the common-sense holistic approach to good health. Many are casting a line to their ancient ancestors and adopting cures once trusted by healers.

One Portland-based organization is making history by bringing African-American healers and midwives together to share techniques, philosophy and provide support for an underrepresented, yet age-old profession.

Portland State University's Women's Studies Department has joined with the International Center for Traditional Childbearing for the second annual Black Midwives and Healers Conference from Thursday, Oct. 17 through Sunday, Oct. 19 at PSU's campus.

"I've attended many conferences for midwives, but none have

really addressed issues that black midwives face," said Shafia Monroe, board president and conference organizer. "With an increase of black healthcare providers in the profession, no one is addressing what we can do to help decrease disparities for women of color who have the highest infant mortality and premature birth rates."

The conference, the only of its kind, is drawing about 200 people from Oregon, California, Nevada, Idaho, Alabama, Georgia, Canada, Ghana and Bermuda.

Participants are reconnecting with ancient traditions through workshops such as "What is the Black Diet," "Mothering the Mother and the Traditional Doula," and "Health, Healing and Wholeness for the African-American Woman" and activities such as West African dancing and creating a communal altar.

Returning to ones roots is integral to the work of the modern midwife, according to Monroe, a midwife for 23 years and mother of seven. She taught practical lessons in nutrition, massage therapy and proper posture from an African perspective during a recent session with a client.

Robyn Harris, who is seven months pregnant, said she sought out a midwife for the emotional support she would provide.

"I want the cultural reference of having a midwife," she said. "It ties the cultural aspect of a village raising a child and makes the birth more special if the baby is delivered by someone who's approachable."

Monroe says she agrees that midwifery incorporates a "village" approach to childbirth.

Nurse Midwife Barbara Douglass, a keynote speaker at the conference, will speak on "Unity is Ours."

"Professionals don't always work collaboratively," said Monroe. "If professionals are collectively unified in the health outcomes of a client, a reference system could include a chiropractor, massage therapist, nutritionist, breastfeeding advocate and mental health counselor that all have the same philosophy."

The documentary "Bringin' In Da Spirit," which heralds the accomplishments of African-American midwives in the United States, will debut at the conference. Rhonda L. Haynes, the film's director, pro-



PHOTO BY JAYMEE R. CUTI/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER  
Midwife Shafia Monroe (left), founder of the International Center for Traditional Childbearing, helps Robyn Harris learn safe positions for standing and bending during pregnancy.

ducer and cinematographer, will take questions during a discussion after the viewing.

For more information about the conference or the various programs that International Center

for Traditional Childbearing offers, call 503-460-9324 extension 3 or visit [www.blackmidwives.org](http://www.blackmidwives.org).

# EL OBSERVADOR

## Hispanics in Military's Lowest Ranks

(AP) — The Pentagon needs to review the promotion process that has left most Hispanics serving in the military's lowest ranks, Hispanic leaders say.

"We have no four-star general or admiral that's Hispanic," said Albert C. Zapanta, chairman of the Defense Department reserve forces policy board. "Out of all the ethnic groups ... we are the only ones underrepresented, underpromoted, under-everything."

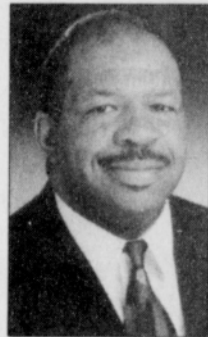
Zapanta spoke to Hispanic journalists, businessmen and academics as they assembled for a speech by Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld, as part of Hispanic Heritage month, that honored Hispanic contributions to the military.

The group wants the department to set up a group that would begin to look into the promotions and find away to lift more Hispanics among the ranks.

After his speech, Rumsfeld acknowledged the plea for a review of the problem. He said "the functioning of this force depends on our being able to reach out to the entire society" and for people to know there will be good opportunities for them if they join the armed forces.

## Black Caucus Praises Hispanic Leadership

Calls for the celebration of different cultures



*This is a historic time in America, where the voice and collective power of African Americans and Hispanics have never been stronger.*

—U.S. Rep. Elijah E. Cummings, chairman of the Black Congressional Congress

The Congressional Black Caucus is praising the work of Hispanic leaders past and present as part of Hispanic Heritage Month.

"The progress our great nation has made is a testament to all that can be achieved when people of all races, religions, and ethnicities put aside their differences and come together to work for a stronger more inclusive nation," said U.S. Rep. Elijah E. Cummings, D-Md., chairman of the caucus.

Cummings called for an America where different cultures are celebrated, "an America where an in-

dividual is judged on his or her merits rather than their skin color or country of origin, and a nation where every single child is able to realize their full potential regardless of their economic background."

He said all Americans should remember the trailblazers who helped our country move forward, like Cesar Chavez whose selfless

sacrifices delivered rights to thousands of workers.

He also saluted Celia Cruz whose hypnotic rhythms spread across borders and touched millions, and Severo Ochoa whose scientific discoveries won him the 1959 Nobel Prize and helped save countless numbers of lives.

"This is a historic time in America,

## Party Supports El Salvador Mission

Volunteers with Northwest Medical Teams will host a benefit on Friday, Oct. 24 to raise funds to cover expenses for an upcoming mission to El Salvador. The event is from 5 to 8:30 p.m. at Urban Wineworks, 407 N.W. 16th Ave.

The evening will feature live music by jazz artists, the City Lights Project, plus a selection of fine wines and a collection of eclectic art by Northwest artists.

## Estefan Receives Humanitarian Award

(AP) — Gloria Estefan, this year's recipient of The Buoniconti Fund Humanitarian Award, autographed drums at a fund-raiser to raise awareness of spinal cord injury.

Cal Ripken Jr., Oscar De La Hoya, David Robinson, Jim Brown, Dorothy Hamill and Roger Penske were among those honored at the "Great Sports Legends Dinner" in New York.

Marc Buoniconti, son of Hall of Fame linebacker Nick Buoniconti, was paralyzed in a college football game in 1985. The dinner, now in its 18th year, brings together business, sports and entertainment leaders.



Singer and humanitarian Gloria Estefan autographs drums before attending the 18th Annual Great Sports Legends Dinner in New York. (AP photo)

## Hispanic Heritage Celebration, Protest



Singer and songwriter Victor Manuelle performs in honor of Hispanic Heritage Month in the East Room of the White House. (AP photo)

(AP) — The lively beat and smooth rhythm of Caribbean music filled the White House on Thursday as President Bush celebrated Hispanic Heritage month with several hundred Hispanics - a voting bloc that's center stage in the 2004 presidential race.

"Mi casa es su casa (My house is your house)," Bush told the audience, a who's who of Hispanic musicians, sports figures, government officials and celebrities.

The Congressional Hispanic Caucus called the more than hour-long event a photo-op and declined to attend.

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