

Midwives Build A Sisterhood For Change

Prenatal care improves lives of women, children.

BY JOHANNA S. KING
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

With its biblical roots found in the book of Exodus, midwifery is an honored and spiritual profession in the African community. The word midwife in many African languages goes hand in hand with the workings of a spiritual healer.

The traditional midwife's calling includes giving spiritual guidance, taking on the role of a public health activist and being a community organizer. Many women have called their decision to become a midwife a direct calling from God. Other women have been moved as

a result of community need. Historically, black midwives have saved the lives of countless mothers and babies throughout the United States. They have provided midwifery care not only to their communities, but also to families outside of the black community.

On a mission to enhance the health and well being of women and their families, the International Center for Traditional Childbearing is taking action. Focused on preserving the traditional role of the midwife in the black community, the north Portland based non-profit organization gives hope to soon to be mothers.

"We are devoted to the health and life of mothers and their children," said program founder, Shafia Monroe.

"Here at the International Center for Traditional Childbearing, we are committed to challenging the many barriers



Founder of the International Center for Traditional Childbearing, Shafia M. Monroe is a 20-year midwife veteran who believes in the Southern style of healing, using the laying on of hands, herbs and prayer for pregnant women and newborns.

to the health of black women," Monroe said. "When we as a people know our history, our self-esteem is raised and then health care and consciousness improve. In returning to the ancient art of midwifery, we are no longer succumbing to overwhelming systemic racism. We are taking our health into our own hands."

By educating and advocating through community workshops, study groups or just one-on-one support, the center offers guidance and support for woman to better take care of their unborn and newborn babies.

The center is also trying to meet the needs of women who want to become midwives themselves to improve family health in their community while educating and supporting pregnant woman desiring to deliver healthy babies.

For more information, visit the center's website at www.blackmidwives.org.

Dear Deanna!

I have problems with my sister constantly giving sweets, candy and junk food to my nieces and nephews. It wouldn't be so bad if she had dental insurance. I guess I worry because teeth are important and if they're ruined it could hurt their self-esteem. How do I approach this subject with her? -- Nikki; Omaha, Neb.

Dear Nikki:

Your sister is rudely making bad decisions regarding her children's teeth. That's something she'll definitely have to deal with later. The only thing you can do is suggest healthy snacks, teeth friendly treats and be there for the kids when they have to put their teeth in a jar at night.

Dear Deanna!

My husband's old affair is tearing me apart. First we had one child and then another one before we got married. I later learned he had an affair with a woman that stroked his ego during my first pregnancy. He claims it was one time but the way she stalked him, harassed us and bothered us for a few years made me doubt it. He confessed when the phone calls started but I still can't get the affair out of my mind when I look at him. -

Ask Deanna!

Real People, Real Advice
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-Anonymus; On-Line Reader

Dear Anonymous:

You set yourself up for drama by getting pregnant without the wedding ring in the first place. You can't lay too much blame on his actions because he wasn't officially your man. If this is in the past, you need to leave it there. Unless he's doing something that's current then get over it. You're causing yourself pain and agony from an old wound. Seek professional or spiritual counseling to get to the root of your pain, squash it and keep it moving.

Dear Deanna!

My 17-year old step-daughter is a mess. My husband pays child support but the mother spends it. She lives with the grandmother who won't let him talk to her or visit. She told the court he was an abusive stranger. They blocked him school visits but then she invited him to a basketball game. She's cursed out everybody, ran away from home, steals, and can't get along with her mother but my husband still wants a relationship with her. --Concerned; Los Angeles

Dear Concerned:

Sounds like "Chuckie" missed a few butt whoopings and strict discipline. She's been severely neglected, brain-washed and manipulated by her mother and grandmother. Regardless of her age, your husband's right by not giving up on her. Once she turns 18, she can operate of her own free will. That may be the time your husband can help her get counseling to improve her self worth and prevent a rocky adulthood.

Ask Deanna is written by Deanna M. Write Ask Deanna! Email: askdeanna@yahoo.com or write: Deanna M, P.O. Box 88847, Los Angeles, CA 90009. Website: www.askdeanna.com

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