

# EL OBSERVADOR

## Graduation is the Just the Beginning

### PCC program puts immigrants on career paths

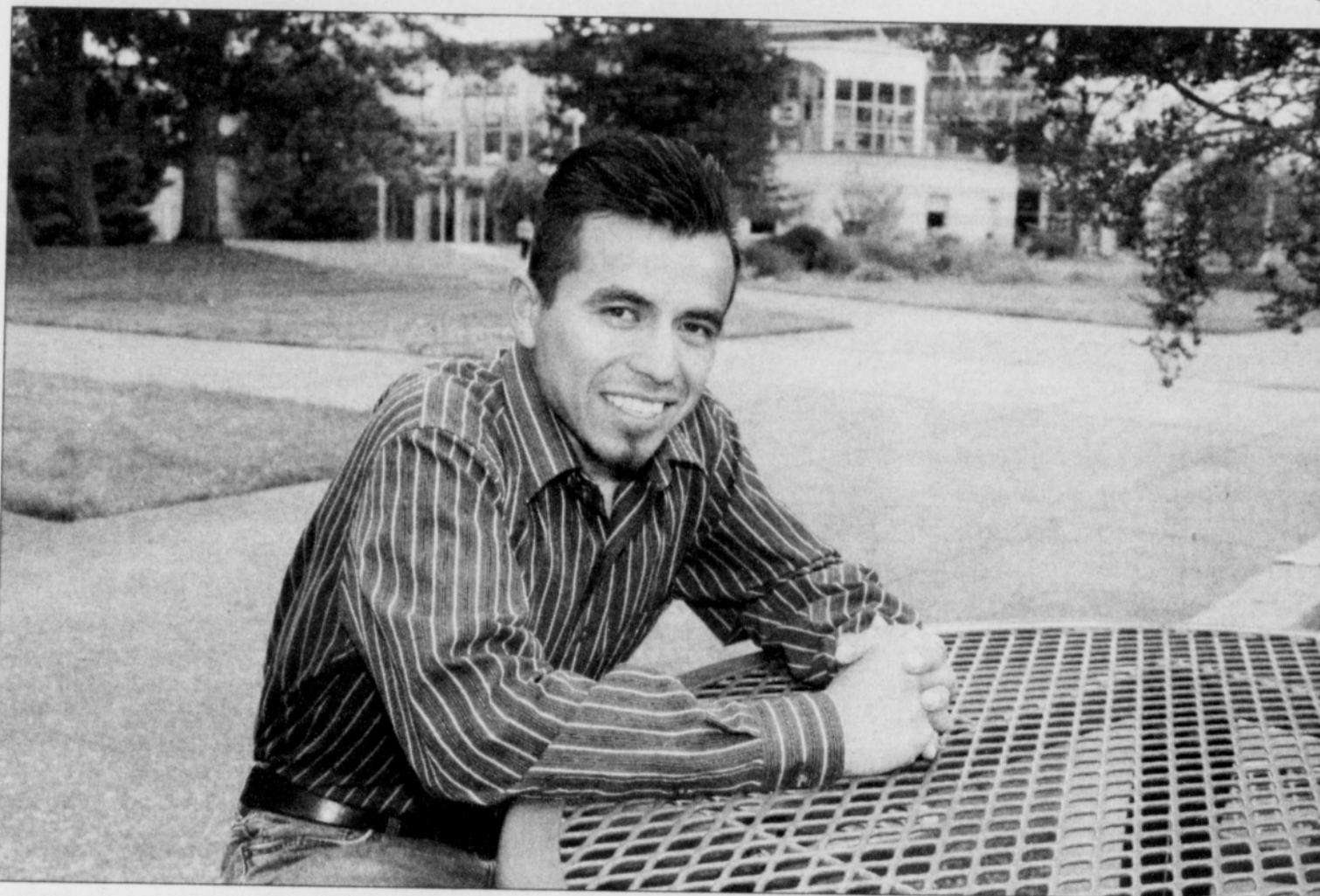
Luis Moreno tells everyone that this isn't the end; it's the beginning to a college degree and a new job.

Moreno is the first to graduate from the new High School Equivalency Program at Portland Community College's Rock Creek Campus and sister program to the College Assistance Migrant Program.

The instruction gives migrant and seasonal farm workers and members of their immediate family help in obtaining a GED, and after graduation, placement in post-secondary education, employment or employment upgrade or military services.

"I'm happy to be the first person, but I'm not feeling that this is it," said Moreno, a native of Mexico and current Hillsboro resident who came to Oregon nine years ago to join his brother.

"I'm still going. It's just the beginning for me. On the last day we had a celebration and I spoke to the other students. I tried to motivate them to do a good job and continue with their education. It's a very good program and it gives you the chance to finish your GED, and gives you a



Luis Moreno is the first to graduate from a new high school equivalency program geared for local immigrants at Portland Community College's Rock Creek campus.

lot of motivation to go finish your certificate," he said.

The accomplishments of Moreno, and the students who follow him in the years to come, were made possible when Portland Community College scored a five-year, \$2.24 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education's Office of

Migrant Education last year. The grant will serve 100 students per year and sustain up to eight program staff members who will work to fill a gap in education for an underserved population.

Oregon has the fifth-largest migrant and seasonal farm worker population in the country and 25

percent live in the northwestern part of the state. With the Latino student enrollment at PCC increasing by 20 percent last year from Oregon's surging Hispanic population, the new educational services should be well utilized.

The program recruits potential students from Clackamas, Wash-

ington, Multnomah, Yamhill and Columbia counties with most coming from Washington County, which has a rich farming industry.

The Program's first director can relate to his students.

Beto Espindola, a HEP and CAMP graduate himself, is the program's first director, joining the college last February after working with migrant and seasonal farm workers the last 25 years in Washington's Yakima Valley.

"Most students who come into the program are thinking GED, but once we start talking to them about plans beyond that, ideas start forming and they start thinking, 'Ah, maybe I can do something else beyond the GED,'" said Espindola. "They start seeing the possibilities which is the secondary objective for all HEP students.

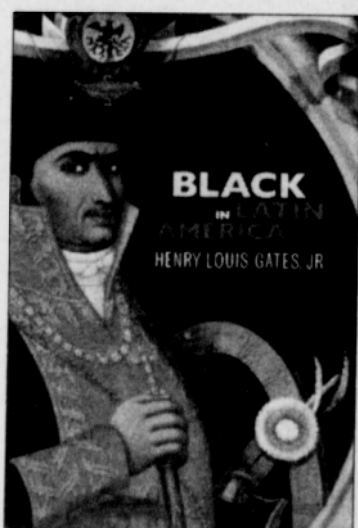
Eventually, Espindola projects 85 percent of the graduates will be placed in English as a Second Other Language and other academic programs, employment or military services. He said the HEP effort is very important in helping the migrant and farm worker population realize their options in education locally.

For more information about this program, call Beto Espindola, HEP director, at 971-722-7760.

### Black Culture in Latin America

#### A hidden history and evolving identity

"Black in Latin America" by Henry Louis Gates Jr.: This spring, Henry Louis Gates Jr. produced a four-episode series for PBS tracing the legacy of the slave trade in six Caribbean and Latin American countries. "Black in Latin America" is the



book companion to the television series of the same title.

The reason for Gates' journey is a startling fact: Of the roughly 11 million Africans who survived the trans-Atlantic slave trade, just 450,000 made it to the United States. The rest were dispersed throughout the region and Gates, renowned for his African-American studies, wanted to know how their descendants live now.

More than an outline of the re-

search featured in the series, Gates' book is a thoughtful travelogue through Mexico, Peru, Cuba, Haiti, the Dominican Republic and Brazil.

It explores black history in these six countries, which Gates visited in 2010, but it doesn't linger in the past. Through music, cuisine, art, dance, politics, religion and language, Gates finds living links to Africa. He also finds the other legacy of the slave trade, a sometimes subtle but persistent racism despite pledges of multiculturalism.

Gates' academic questions about race stem from conversations in cafes, hotels, museums, street parties, nightclubs, taxi cabs — the casual places where anyone goes on vacation. "Black in Latin America" would be an interesting companion to any guidebook for the Caribbean and Latin America, as it reveals not just a hidden history but also an evolving sense of identity.

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