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Portland theater group presents powerful play  
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**Remembering Steve Jones**  
Local standout had impact in two pro leagues  
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Culturally competent doula training in Portland is geared toward reducing health disparities in and improving birth outcomes in the African American community and increasing the number of doulas of color. Long time Portland doula and midwife Shafia Monroe (right) leads the training session providing education, resources and emotional support.

## Improving Birth Outcomes

### A new journey for a Portland entrepreneur

BY DANA LYNN BARBAR  
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

A Portland midwife, public health expert and business woman with decades of culturally-competent birth experience has taken on a new role in her journey to improve health disparities and reduce infant mortality in the African American community.

Shafia Monroe moved to Portland in 1991 and founded the International Center for Traditional Childbearing (ICTC), a non-profit to honor the legacy of the 20th Century African American midwife, reduce infant mortality and increase the number of midwives and doulas of color.

Now as the non-profit organization grows into a new



Shafia Monroe

direction, Monroe is taking over the group's Full Circle Doula Birth Companion training program as a private business. Under the nameplate Shafia Monroe Consulting/Birthing Change, she becomes the only woman and minority-owned emerging small business owner in Portland providing doula training.

Monroe told the Portland Observer she is "ecstatic and proud" to take on this new role.

The word "doula" is Greek and literally means slave women. In the late 1970s, research confirmed that when a laboring woman has a female support as a doula, her labor shortens, with reduced intervention, less Caesarean sections, better breastfeeding rates in the first hour of birth, and the mother and father felt more satisfied with their birth experience.

Monroe said doulas are not medical staff, they are not midwives or doctors, but work with them to help the mother during labor and birth. Doulas offer education, resources and emotional support, and help with writing birth plans and what to bring to the hospital. Doulas can come to your home after the birth to help with postpartum support with baby soothing tips, light house-keeping,

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