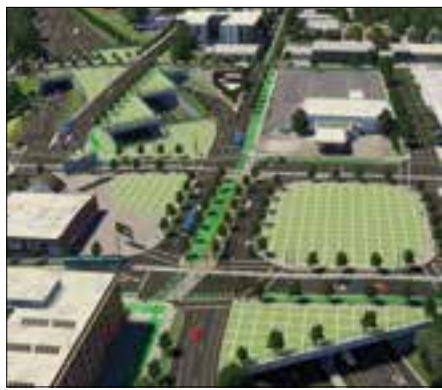




Established in 1970



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Committed to Cultural Diversity

Putting Kids and Families First



PHOTO BY BEVERLY CORBELL/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Bahia Overton, the new executive director of Portland's Black Parent Initiative, has only been on the job since Jan. 3, but has big plans for the nonprofit.

Bahia Overton is the new leader for Black Parent Initiative

BY BEVERLY CORBELL
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

A frequent problem facing teachers, social workers and others providing resources to African-American children and their families is a lack of cultural awareness, since most of them — in the whitest major city in America — are white, which

can lead to unintentionally missing cultural clues.

Bahia Overton, the new executive director of Portland's Black Parent Initiative, has been on the job for less than a month, but her direction is clear: To improve the cultural awareness social workers and others have in providing resources to the black community and grow support for programs the group sponsors to help black kids and black families become successful.

The Black Parent Initiative has been helping families attain educational success for their children while also helping the en-

tire family achieve financial, educational and spiritual growth since its founding in 2006.

Programs start at birth, with BPI's Sacred Roots Doula program, where trained professionals help families through the entire birthing process, from pre-natal counseling to home visits after the baby is born.

The agency also offers breastfeeding and lactation education and support, including home visits. The idea is for African American women to have the best possible circumstances for bringing babies into the world, and then to prepare them for edu-

cating their children to eventually become self-sufficient adults.

Overton, whose first name is pronounced Ba-HEE-ah, said BPI also offers employment and financial counseling and even provides help with in setting up bank accounts including a nest egg to help people get started.

"We try to help families with employment instability to become stabilized through coaching, and we partner with Worksystems Inc., Portland Public Schools,

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