

## Afro-Cuban priests predicting more homeland disease and crime in 2006

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

HAVANA—Priests of the Afro-Cuban religion Santeria called on islanders Monday to be wary of diseases, broken agreements and corruption as they issued their much-anticipated predictions for the New Year.

Although the annual "Letter of the Year" is vague enough to be interpreted in a variety of ways, Cubans anxiously look forward to it each January.

Several competing groups of Santeria priests, or babalao, gather every New Year's Eve for religious ceremonies that include chanting and animal sacrifices. Predictions are announced in the first days of the New Year.

Santeria is a mix of spiritual traditions carried here by African slaves and Roman Catholicism brought by Spaniards. The faith is practiced throughout Cuba, even many members of the Communist Party follow its rituals and look forward to the predictions each year.

The "10 de Octubre" group of nearly 900 priests, named for the Havana municipality where it is based, issued the warning about disease, ruptured accords and increased corruption.

The group said that the Santeria orishas, or gods, ruling 2006 will be Obatala, god of wisdom and justice represented in the Roman Catholic faith as Our Lady of Mercy,

and Ochun, the goddess of maternity and newborns, whose representation is Cuba's patron saint, the Virgin of Charity.

The priests predicted that Cubans will need to watch out for cerebrovascular problems, stomach disorders, hormonal ailments and unknown diseases.

Society as a whole can expect an increase in crime, particularly corruption; broken agreements, including international accords, and a risk of drought and other natural disasters.

A different Santeria group, the Yoruba Association, which is more closely allied with Cuba's communist government, had similar predic-

tions with some variations and said that the orishas ruling 2006 would be Oggun, associated with St. Peter in Roman Catholicism, and the Virgin of Charity.

The Yoruba group called for Cubans to pay attention to their health, especially cardiovascular ailments and mental problems.

It warned against violence and alcohol and drug abuse, calling for the exercise of intelligence, humility and the guarding of secrets.

Like the larger "10 de Octubre" group, the Yoruba Association also called on Cubans not to underestimate the power of meteorological phenomenon.

## Muslims' religious differences underscore liquor proliferation

Continued from page 6B

city and Middle Eastern shop owners, many of them also of Muslim faith.

"Any Muslim is forbidden to sell alcohol but that doesn't give you the right to vandalize by force and try to impose your view," said Mohamed Saleh Mohamed, president of the Yemeni American Grocers Association, which represents 250 to 300 Oakland merchants. "That's not acceptable in any religion."

Four men connected to a bakery founded by a prominent black Muslim family were arrested in the Nov. 23 attacks and the images of seven others were caught on store security cameras. In both instances, the vandals asked store clerks why they were selling alcohol when it was against the Muslim faith.

At the center of the vandalism is Your Black Muslim Bakery, a community institution founded by Yusuf Bey, a prominent black Muslim leader who died of cancer in 2003. Bey's 19-year-old son, Yusuf Bey IV, is one of the four men facing felony charges that include hate crimes, vandalism and false imprisonment.

The bakery features an outdoor mural of Elijah Muhammad holding a pie and sells Malcolm X books along with

baked goods. The organization faced scrutiny in the past, when founder Bey defended himself against allegations that he raped young women from 1976 to 1995, but it also has been lauded for providing jobs and guidance to young black men from poor communities.

Bakery employees declined to discuss the late November incidents at the two stores. But defense lawyer Lorna Brown said the vandalism has prompted discussions throughout the black community.

"I think it's pretty clear that the number of these stores in low-income communities is not good for people," she said.

While black and Middle Eastern Muslims may pray at the same mosques on weekends, their worlds do not tend to overlap much beyond that, said Hatem Bazian, professor of Near East and Ethnic Studies at the University of California, Berkeley.

Muslim store owners tend to live in the suburbs away from the concerns of black Muslims, who disproportionately live in cities, Bazian said. The immigrant shopkeepers also interpret Islam to justify selling alcohol.

"They open businesses regardless because of economic opportunities," Bazian said. "The question becomes would

they open a liquor store back home? The answer is, they wouldn't be able to do it."

As police continue the search for suspects, community leaders have targeted the glut of corner markets selling fortified wine, malt liquor and cheap alcohol as one of Oakland's most pressing problems.

West Oakland, where the twin vandalisms took place, has 69 stores supplying liquor or beer and wine. That's 28 more than the maximum number acceptable by state standards for the population, according to Urban Strategies Council, an advocacy group working to reduce poverty.

Jamillah Smith, 33, lives in a West Oakland neighborhood close to several liquor stores and corner markets. She said the stores are hubs for drug dealing and violence and that drunks often urinate on the walls of the markets.

Smith is afraid to let her children, ages 14, 12, and 10, walk near the shops after a man was shot in front of a market. But she doesn't own a car and must occasionally visit the stores to purchase essentials.

"If I had known it was like this I would have never moved over here," she said, adding that the markets should be encouraged to sell more fresh foods.

## Court upholds the GM program that was accused of religious bias

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

INDIANAPOLIS—A General Motors program that allows Hispanics, blacks or lesbians—but not Christians—to organize in employee groups is not committing religious discrimination, a federal court ruled.

GM's Affinity Group diversity program does not discriminate against Christians because it treats all religions equally, the 7th Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals in Chicago ruled Thursday.

The court upheld a decision by a federal judge in Indianapolis, where the original lawsuit was filed by John Moranski, a born-again Christian who works at GM's Allison Transmission plant in Indianapolis.

Moranski applied in December 2002 to start an interdenominational Christian employees group as part of the diversity program, according to court documents.

GM rejected the application because program guidelines do not allow Affinity Groups to promote religious positions, the documents state. Moranski filed a complaint with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and then filed a federal lawsuit claiming that the denial constituted illegal religious discrimination.

Judge David Hamilton dismissed the suit, holding that Moranski had failed to state a



THE STOCK MARKET

claim for the court to consider.

The appeals court agreed. "The allegations in Moranski's complaint make clear that General Motors would have taken the same action had he possessed a different religious position," Judge Ann Claire Williams wrote in opinion.

Moranski argued that the guidelines treat religious groups less favorably than nonreligious groups, but the appeals court disagreed. The guidelines, the court said, prohibit the forming of Affinity Groups based on any religious position, including atheism.

"Simply stated, General Motors's Affinity Group policy treats all religious alike—it excludes them all from serv-

ing as the basis of a company-recognized Affinity Group," Williams wrote.

GM corporate diversity spokeswoman Crystal Hickman said the company was pleased with the decision but declined to elaborate.

According to GM's Web site, the company recognizes nine Affinity Groups including ones for people with disabilities, gays and lesbians, women, Hispanics, veterans, and four groups for people of African or Asian ancestry.

Moranski could not be located for comment as no home telephone number was listed for him in the Indianapolis area.



Featuring Charlotte's Premier Exclusive Designers  
For Ladies and Gents




**Ramada Inn Woodlawn**  
212 West Woodlawn Rd  
**January 21, 2006 5:00pm**  
Advanced Ticket Price: \$25\*  
At The Door: \$35\*  
*There will be Door Prize Give-aways!!*

\*Tickets can be purchased online at [www.beautybydesign2006.com](http://www.beautybydesign2006.com),  
also at Dudley's Beauty College (contact Valerie Coffey, 704.392.2564)

Special Guest Appearance:  
WNBA Star "Helen Gatling" of  
the Charlotte Sting

Featured Fashion  
Commentator:  
Ms. Donna F. Sullivan of  
M3 Model Management

For more information: 704.996.5742 • 704.777.8479  
This event is sponsored by: WOF and L.A. Entertainment

The  
Charlotte  
Post

# CHARLOTTE SYMPHONY

## 10th Annual DAYBREAK OF FREEDOM

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Concert and including a tribute to Rosa Parks

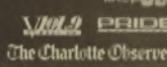
MON JAN 16 • 7 pm Blumenthal Performing Arts Center

One of Charlotte's signature King Day celebrations, *Daybreak of Freedom* is an inspirational concert highlighting the civil rights struggle and the life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. "It was a glorious concert," proclaimed *The Charlotte Observer*, "for those of us who were fortunate enough to be there will hear its music ring in our ears for a long time."

**LifeShare**  
Of The Carolinas  
Daybreak of Freedom Concert Sponsor



Tickets starting at just \$5  
Student Rush 50% off  
704-972-2000 • ONLINE [www.charlottesymphony.org](http://www.charlottesymphony.org)




# Rejoice

## RADIO

1370 AM 94.7 FM 1490 AM

*The Best Variety of Christian Music in the Carolinas & Georgia*

[www.RejoiceNetwork.com](http://www.RejoiceNetwork.com)



Frank & Emma



Larry Anderson

### Tune In For Our Live Broadcast Partners



**New Hope Missionary Baptist Church**  
8:30 - 9:00 AM



**St. Luke Missionary Baptist Church**  
9:00 - 10:00 AM



**St. Paul Missionary Baptist Church**  
11:00 AM - 12:00 PM

---

**Tune In With Reeder Memorial From The Pulpit**  
12:00 - 1:00 PM

---

**To Partner, Call**  
803-329-2760 or Fax 803-329-3317