

African American History Month

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Kiki Haynes delivers inspiring speech at the PCCC Theater.

Film and TV Star Kiki Haynes is Special Guest at Opening Ceremony

Actress Encourages Students to Dream Big

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Actress Kiki Haynes, a star on Tyler Perry's TBS comedy *For Better or Worse* was the special guest on February 2, 2012 at the opening ceremony of PCCC's African American History Month observance. The theme of this year's celebration is *Black Women in History & Culture* and Haynes, a self-proclaimed "Jersey girl," held the audience rapt with a presentation that was touching, funny, and inspirational.

More than 200 students, faculty, and staff attended the program which was sponsored by the Student Programming Committee of the SGA at PCCC within the Office of Student Activities. "What's your dream?" the actress asked from the podium onstage at the Paterson campus theatre. "What's that thing you most love to do and would do even if you didn't get paid?"

For Haynes that dream was acting. "But throughout my life, I tried to fool myself," Haynes confessed. Convinced by well-meaning friends and relatives that acting couldn't be a real career choice, she tried to deny what her heart was telling her to do.

As a student at Arts High School in Newark, a teenaged Haynes was surrounded by "like minded people," other students who also dreamed of careers as performers and teachers who encouraged them. She felt supported there, but after graduation, she once again worried that she should pursue a career in a more conventional field.

Haynes entered Fairleigh-Dickinson University on the EOF (Educational Opportunity Fund) program and graduated with a degree in liberal arts and communication. “I was the first in my family to earn a degree,” said the actress to enthusiastic applause.

Right out of college, Haynes rejected the offer a great corporate position and took a lesser job in New York, so she could go to auditions. Her decision paid off when she landed a part in the Spike Lee film *Bamboozled* and was invited to join the Screen Actors Guild.

The young actress moved to Los Angeles to pursue her dream, but found herself in what felt like a nightmare instead. “The year before I booked the role on the Perry show was the worst year of my life,” said Haynes whose mother was in the audience.

Far from her New Jersey home and family, the actress was struggling financially and feeling overlooked in auditions. To make matters worse, her boyfriend ended their relationship. But her dream and her Christian faith kept her going. “When something is meant for you, it’s meant for you,” she insisted.

Looking out at the students, many of whom also come from urban roots and are the first in their families to attend college, Haynes declared, “Never give up on your dreams. I’m from Jersey, and if I can do it you can do it.”

“Kiki delivered a great message that PCCC students needed to hear,” said Deeanne Hackett, Assistant Director of the PCCC Office of Student Activities and a college friend of the actress.

“She encouraged them to remain focused, keep positive, and not give up...success comes with time.”



Above: Haynes with college pal Deeanne Hackett, Assistant Director of Student Activities at PCCC.



Left: Haynes (with members of the Student Programming Committee) stayed for the post-program reception to chat with students and sign autographs.

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