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Regional TV Personality Encourages MSCC Students to Work Hard, Persevere

Rough times and lack of resources may hinder success, but faith, hard work, and determination can offset those disadvantages, said regional TV personality Loretta McNary in a presentation at Mid-South Community College.

Speaking as part of MSCC's Student Activities' "Empowerment" series, McNary told the audience how she beat what many might have considered improbable, if not impossible, odds.

"It doesn't matter where you come from," she said. "I came from nothing. It doesn't matter that I have five kids, including one in heaven, and that I'm a single mom. Can something good come out of the hood? Yes it can. A lot of good comes out of the hood."



"Every story includes some rough times...but you can't let bad times determine who you become. Because I do everything in excellence, look the part, and do my best, I'm just like everybody else that you see on TV. And I started with not a nickel. Don't let anything stop you; you can do it too. "

Her television program, "The Loretta McNary Show," spotlights local and national celebrities, educators, CEOs, medical experts, fashionistas, and ordinary people

who accomplish extraordinary humanitarian efforts. The show currently airs in Tennessee, Arkansas, Mississippi, and Georgia, and McNary is negotiating to extend its reach to Texas. Her ultimate goal is national syndication.

McNary began her television career with little more than a what she interpreted as an inspired vision. While working for a Bible and Theology professor at Crichton College, she attended chapel one day and “must have dozed off.” She said she dreamed of having her own Christian television show, “not preachy and not religious” and “not a ‘black’ show.’ To me, there’s only one race, and that’s the human race, and only one color, and that’s green.”

As a Crichton employee, she had the option of reserving the large meeting hall at no charge, so she booked it and began working toward her first production. She sent invitations and received positive responses from about 100 people.

McNary began to wonder about her plan, however, when she started looking for video assistance.

“People told me, ‘I’ll shoot your show for \$10,000; I’ll shoot your show for \$5,000.’ I’m like, ‘No, you won’t because I don’t have it. I don’t have \$10. I don’t have any money.’ Everybody I talked to thought I was crazy – everybody. But I knew I had to do it.”

The day before the show, she still had made no video arrangements.

“The producer from On Cable Tonight called and asked, ‘Did you find a crew yet?’ I said, ‘No.’ He said, ‘So what is your plan?’ I said, ‘Well, I have a few friends who have those little hand-held camcorders.’”

“He said, ‘Loretta, don’t do that; I’ve got you covered.’ So James Michael comes with three broadcast cameras and two crew members, and I shoot my first show with cameras that cost probably \$10,000 apiece and two camera guys. You know how much it cost me? I gave the church \$150, and that’s nothing.”

She now has a 4,000 square foot studio of her own, has interviewed Denzel Washington, has walked the red carpet at the Academy Awards while mingling with numerous Hollywood celebrities, and has access to three limousines when she needs them.

“This all happened because I didn’t quit,” McNary said. “I swallowed my pride and did what I had to do. I never sacrifice who I am, but I understand how things work. It’s all about positioning and building relationships. It takes money to do what I do, but I have so much grace and favor that I can interview anybody Oprah, Ellen, and Wendy can.”

While she enjoys her television work, she doesn’t consider that her primary vocation. “My most important job is being a mom for my children,” McNary pointed out.

She said her family keeps her grounded.

“I still have to take my mom to Walgreen’s,” she said. “I can come back from having the time of my life in Beverly Hills, and my mom calls and says ‘Come on by here and take me to Walgreen’s.’ And I have to do her hair. I have people who do my hair, but I have to do my mom’s hair.”

“And my sons say, ‘Mom can you take us to the mall?’ I may have just stepped out of a Lamborghini limousine, but I have to take my kids to the mall just like any other mom.”

McNary encouraged students to think big.

“For instance, if you want to do hair, don’t be satisfied with working for somebody else; own it. Go and work with somebody else to start, learn what you need to learn, and then own it. And don’t be afraid of where you are. I’ve had one foot in Beverly Hills and one foot in Orange Mound.”

She also said it’s okay to seek assistance from others.

“Whatever you want to do, you can’t do it by yourself,” McNary explained. “If I had to do all over again, I would ask for help earlier. I wouldn’t even let people help me for free, and these were people who were at the top of their game. That’s the wrong thing to do. No I have that pill swallowed.”

The TV show host also encouraged students to take advantage of the human resources at MSCC.

“You have Tony (Wilson, Student Activities Coordinator); you have all of your advisors. You’re paying them, and they’re here to help you, so use them. They have so much experience. You are so lucky to have resources like that. You guys should be the best of the best.”

For information on special presentations, student activities, or educational opportunities at MSCC, call (870) 733-6728, visit the campus at 2000 West Broadway in West Memphis, email admissions@midsouthcc.edu, or check the website at www.midsouthcc.edu.