

**WOMEN'S STUDIES PROGRAM ANNUAL SCHOLARSHIP BREAKFAST/
MONTGOMERY COLLEGE, ROCKVILLE CAMPUS, THEATRE ARTS ARENA**

In Honor of the Women on Whose Shoulders We Stand

A Speech by
Montgomery College President
Dr. DeRionne Pollard

March 9, 2011

As part of Montgomery College's annual Women's Studies Scholarship Breakfast, Dr. Pollard honored the 2011 On Her Shoulders We Stand Awardees and 2011 Student Scholarship Winners. From our students to our faculty, the stories of successful women abound at the College and prove what a long way women have come since the days of Dame Schools and M.R.S degrees.

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Good morning! Honoring women on whose shoulders we stand and honoring our next generation of women leaders is a perfect way to celebrate Women's History Month. Thank you to Professor Carminati and the women's studies program for having me participate in this wonderful event. And congratulations on 24 years of teaching students about women's contributions to our nation's culture and history. I feel like I am back home! As a graduate student at Iowa State University, I had the opportunity to teach a women's studies course and I served as an education programmer for the Women's Center on campus. So, this is a subject close to my heart.

Fortunately, here at Montgomery College, we witness the wonders of working women, stay-at-home-moms, first generation students, and every kind of woman possible. What they all have in common is that they all chose Montgomery College and they all have a determination to transform their lives through education. I want to share just a few special stories of women—our own students or alumnae—who are working to transform their lives.

Let me tell you about *Julie*—a 30-something stay-at-home mother who is studying to become a personal trainer. After weighing in at 375 pounds, Julie reached her lowest point and decided this was her time for transformation. So she started walking...which turned to running...which turned to racing, including completing a half marathon. She says “the thought of returning to college seemed like such a huge, daunting endeavor. But, all of those races, all of that training, have shown me that goals are achievable when you put in the work.”

Let me tell you about *Marcia*, who came to MC with two major challenges: she was visually impaired, and she never finished high school. Yet Marcia wanted something more in

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her life, so she set about transforming it! She earned her GED through the College's Adult ESOL and Literacy-GED Program and moved successfully to culinary school. Now Marcia has her very own food business, serving federal workers in Rockville. As Marcia says, "determination, hard work, and a goal are all you need!"

I know everyone here today has witnessed her own transformation—whether in your own life or in the life of one of your students. Remember, transformation is not a solitary process. It is possible because we stand on the shoulders of the many wonderful, inspirational women who have come before us and paved the way. It is easy to forget just how recently these victories for women's education occurred and easy to forget that what we do—truly, what we achieve—every day wasn't always possible.

Gone are the days of teaching women household skills that would land her an M-R-S degree. Gone are the days of Dame Schools where women learn the basic ABC's and skills like sewing, while their brothers go off to continue their education. Gone are the days when "experts" like Dr. Edward Clarke would argue, quote "*A woman's body could only handle a limited number of developmental tasks at one time – that girls who spent too much energy developing their minds during puberty would end up with undeveloped or diseased reproductive systems.*"

Flash forward to today: statistics show women are more likely to receive bachelor's degrees than men. Look at our student body: more than half are women. Women can—and do—pursue any avenue of study.

We at Montgomery College are not resting on our laurels. We continue to innovate to become the most relevant community college in the country by meeting the needs of our students and our community. For us, this means helping the women in our community and in our College

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transform their lives through education. Our students—like the scholarship recipients here today—go on to do amazing things, right here in our own community.

And why is that? Why are our alumnae so successful? It's obvious; it is because of the women like Nancy Nyland, Deborah Stearns and Deborah Taylor, who are dedicated both inside and outside the classroom. Congratulations to and thank you for all you do.

To our scholarship winners, you have shown tremendous potential in your academic, career and extracurricular activities. I have no doubt you will be the next generation of women leaders. You have already taken the first important step in transforming your lives—you are seeking a college education.

And maybe as a next step—the White House? I believe the woman who will shatter that glass ceiling may be sitting in this very room. Just do me a favor and don't forget about us—and Montgomery College—on your way up!

We look forward to the successful women that all of you will become.

Thank you.