

December 17, 2008
For Immediate Release

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First black woman in space to keynote GPC MLK Celebration

Dr. Mae Jemison, the first African-American female to travel in space, will be the keynote speaker for the 13th annual Georgia Perimeter College Martin Luther King Jr. Birthday Celebration to be held 7 p.m., Thursday, Jan. 15, 2009. The event is free and open to the public.

The theme of this year's celebration, "Historic Firsts," honors those who paved the way for others by being the first in their specific endeavor. In completing her first space flight, Jemison logged 190 hours, 30 minutes, 23 seconds in space.

Jemison credits self-confidence in achieving that historic first. "I had to learn very early not to limit myself due to others' limited imaginations. I have learned these days never to limit anyone else due to my limited imagination."

Currently a professor of environmental studies at Dartmouth College, Jemison also runs the Jemison Group, Inc., an organization that researches, develops and implements advanced technologies to bring healthcare to African countries. Also, she has founded an international camp for students ages 12 to 16.

GPC hosts a week of mentoring rallies and workshops in the days leading up to the evening program to encourage GPC students to mentor others. Dunwoody and Newton campuses will hold their rallies on Tuesday, Jan. 13. Decatur and Clarkston campuses will hold their events on Wednesday, Jan. 14. The GPC Center for Corporate and Continuing Education will hold a workshop on mentoring at 10 a.m., Thursday, Jan. 15 at the Clarkston Campus.

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Following the workshop, DeKalb County Sheriff Thomas Brown, a GPC alumnus, will speak at a brunch set for 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Clarkston Campus, to encourage mentoring and networking.

The MLK evening celebration will be held at Beulah Missionary Baptist Church, 2340 Clifton Springs Road, Decatur. The program includes a keynote address by Jemison, performances by the DeKalb Symphony Orchestra and the GPC Jazz Ensemble. Also, awards will be given for outstanding humanitarian contributions by an individual, a student and a corporation.

This is the largest King event held in Georgia, with almost 3,000 guests attending each year. Past speakers have included renowned pediatric brain neurosurgeon Dr. Ben Carson, critically-acclaimed performer Ben Vereen and *Essence* Editor-at-Large Susan Taylor. The Presenting Sponsor is Harland Clarke, which provides check and check-related products, direct marketing and contact center services to financial and commercial institutions as well as directly to individual consumers.

Frank Ski, V103-FM morning personality, and Fox5-TV Atlanta weekend sports anchor Karen Graham will emcee the event. Ski, an award-winning media mogul in radio, recording, television and film, has amassed a fan base across the country. Graham, an Emmy-award winning journalist, has taken courses in the American Sign Language Interpreter program at Georgia Perimeter College.

“Our focus at GPC is student success,” said GPC President Dr. Anthony S. Tricoli. “By remaining accessible, affordable, and by offering award-winning faculty teaching in small classes, we are able to empower our students to break new ground, including being the first in their families to earn a college degree. Dr. Jemison embodies that goal.”

For more information on the MLK celebration, call Barbara Obrentz at 678-891-2685 or visit www.gpc.edu/mlk.

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Georgia Perimeter College, the third largest institution of the University System of Georgia, serves nearly 23,000 students through four campuses and several sites in metro Atlanta. For additional information, visit www.gpc.edu.