

The Verdict Is In: Judge Hatchett to Speak at FAMU

Contributed by Brandon Neasman -- Black College Wire
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Courtroom celebrity will deliver fall commencement address

Judge Glenda Hatchett will be the keynote speaker at Florida A&M University's 2008 Fall Commencement, which will take place on Friday Dec. 12, at the Leon County Civic Center at 6 p.m.

Hatchett, who is most famous for her courtroom television show titled "Judge Hatchett," joins the likes of Bishop Eddie Long and Nikki Giovanni as notable speakers to address FAMU's graduating class at its graduation ceremony. "The commencement committee felt that Judge Hatchett could inspire this year's graduates," said Sharon Saunders, special assistant to the president for communications.

Hatchett, who is no stranger to the hill, has spoken at FAMU before and according to Glyndell Presley, director of publications and one of the co-chairs on the commencement committee, received an overwhelming response from students when she spoke at a previous convocation.

The commencement committee, along with input from president James Ammons, determines who should speak for each commencement.

"The committee is made up of about 20 to 25 people," said Henry Kirby, associate vice-president and dean of student affairs.

According to Kirby, that committee consists of deans, professors, administrators, directors, student representatives and other FAMU staff members that work in different departments across the campus.

According to Saunders, the committee looks for speakers they think will deliver an important message to students as well as speakers that have a record of success and achievement.

Before becoming a judge, Hatchett was the senior attorney and manager of public relations for Delta Air Lines. While working for Delta, Hatchett was named one of the "100 Best and Brightest Women in Corporate America" by Ebony Magazine.

Presley also pointed out that availability played a crucial role in who is selected as the keynote speaker for each commencement ceremony.

Hatchett's selection as the keynote speaker for this year's commencement has students talking about the committee's decision.

"I'm excited," said John Hinson Jr., 23, a fifth year professional MBA student from Miami. "She's not a big celebrity or star, but I'm looking forward to it. I think it was a good choice."

Not everyone however is as excited about Hatchett's selection to be the keynote speaker at commencement.

"I'm a little disappointed," said Tiffani Davis, 22, a professional MBA student from Dallas, Texas.

Davis said, if she were given the chance to choose anyone to speak she would pick Barack and Michelle Obama to speak at commencement.

"The hype isn't there," Davis said. "She may surprise me and be awesome, but as of right now I'm not too excited about it."

The commencement committee meets on Tuesday mornings at 9:30 a.m. in the embassy room of the student union and welcomes all who would like to attend the meetings.

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Brandon Neasman writes for The Famuan, the Florida A&M University student newspaper, which originally published this article.