

# National Leadership Conference: Malveaux Says 'Run for Office'

Contributed by Teresa Hughes and Black College Wire staff  
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## Educator-activist urges political involvement at Rust College event

Julianne Malveaux, president of Bennett College for Women, urged students to get involved in politics during her address at the recent National African American Student Leadership Conference at Rust College.

"We will fight the oppressor as long as we can. I am tired of our part in our own oppression. We have to acknowledge the role we play in our own oppression," said Malveaux, in a motivational speech to conference participants at the historically black college in Mississippi. The theme of the 2009 conference, held Jan. 16-17, was "Holistically: Reclaiming Your Greatness."

Malveaux told the students they must have a commitment to scholarship. She challenged students to make their voices heard. "Get into politics early, run for office, lose but run again." Find something to run for, she emphasized, including social economic justice.

She quoted from Dr. Martin Luther King's, 'I have a dream' speech. "We have come to our nation's capital to cash a check... and that check has come back marked insufficient funds."

Malveaux, who has a Ph.D. in economics from MIT, said the dream had not fully been attained, even with the election of Barack Obama as U.S. president. One of every four black people is poor; unemployment is 7.2 percent to 11 percent for blacks; and that adds up to blacks accounting for 38 percent of America's poverty.

"We need to deal with cashing the check," Malveaux said. She then reflected on King's statement, "The curse of poverty is an abomination in any age. It is a cancer, and cannibalism."

Malveaux posed the question, "How do you live asset-free in America?" she said noting that 30 percent of black people have no assets, no bank accounts, yet they have cell phones, and some even have multiple ipods. "Our ancestors were bodacious and they had none of this," she said.

She called upon the students to "be bodacious" in reclaiming their greatness.

Malveaux is widely known as a commentator on issues including race, culture, gender and economics. Her weekly column appeared for more than a decade in newspapers across the country. She has made television appearances on networks including CNN, BET, PBS, NBC, ABC and Fox News, according to her Web site.

Other conference speakers included Joy DeGruy-Leary, a professor at Portland State University, and Jeffery Menzise, a lecturer in psychology.

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Teresa Hughes writes for the Rustorian, the Rust College student newspaper, which originally published a version of this story.