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CONTACT: WANDA MOBLEY
336-517-2267



“Lift Every Voice” Speaker Series Recognizes World AIDS Day



In 1986 at the young age of 23, **Rae Lewis Thornton** was diagnosed as HIV Positive. She will share her story on **Thursday, December 3**, as the next voice in the “Lift Every Voice” Speaker Series. The program, beginning at **11:00 am in the Annie Merner Pfeiffer Chapel**, will recognize World AIDS Day and bring more awareness of the impact of HIV/AIDS on women. The speaker series, an initiative started by President Julianne Malveaux, brings to the Bennett campus and the Greensboro community, voices that lift and inspire. The event is free and open to the public.

Despite her present day status of having full-blown AIDS (ACQUIRED Immune-deficiency Syndrome), Lewis-Thornton leads her own unending crusade to educate and challenge young and old audiences to take control of their own bodies, futures and health. Rae uses her life as an example that AIDS is a non-discriminatory disease. She challenges the most common myths and stereotypes surrounding who and how one can become infected with the HIV virus that most often results in AIDS and death. In doing this, she incorporates her own oratory skills, personal experiences and unyielding honesty to create and disseminate her critical and deadly message of her own day by day, personal destruction by AIDS.

Lewis-Thornton has been featured in numerous national magazines and on television specials such as Dateline, CNN, Black Entertainment Television, (BET) and the Montel Williams Show. She was also featured on NIGHTLINE with Ted Koppel in news articles entitled, **“Rae’s Story,” AIDS: The Next Wave and AIDS at Twenty Years**. She has been a guest on The Oprah Winfrey Show. Lewis-Thornton uses all forms of media to convey her message. She served as a contributing editor for WBBM-TV, a CBS-owned and operated television station for an ongoing series of first person stories on living with AIDS. She received an Emmy Award for her series.

Licensed as a Baptist minister in 2000, Lewis-Thornton received a Master of Divinity degree from McCormick Theological Seminary in 2003. She is the recipient of the Arthur Hays Fellowship in Church History. She is currently a PhD candidate at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago. She received her Bachelor of Arts degree from Northeastern Illinois University and is a member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority. Her anticipated life story, **Unprotected, A Memoir** is set to be released soon by Hyperion Publishers.

The “Lift Every Voice” Speaker Series has brought to the Bennett campus and the Greensboro community such notable figures as Iyanla Vanzant, the premier African American teacher, writer and speaker on the subjects of spirituality and personal development; asha bandele, an award-winning author and journalist; The Honorable Linda Tarr-Whelan, Demos Distinguished Senior Fellow and premier expert on women’s leadership; award-winning journalist Ed Gordon; and the phenomenal poet Nikki Giovanni.

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900 E. Washington Street
Greensboro, NC 27401
p: 336-273-4431 www.bennett.edu

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