



CSU Stanislaus President

Marvalene Hughes

by Kimberly Horg

Life for Dr. Marvalene Hughes began in a world filled with oppression. Growing up in the South during a time of racial segregation, she knew that one day she would try to make a change and that change would come through education. It has taken a life-long commitment but Dr. Hughes made her dream a reality when in 1994 she became the sixth President of California State University, Stanislaus (CSUS).

"Education, I believe, is our greatest liberator and our strongest investment in peace," she said. "The long-term benefits are ahead and I will anxiously watch the results."

Marvalene Hughes came from a long line of educators, most of whom were public school teachers. Her mother, Alverta Hughes, was an elementary school teacher and a principal. Her father, Judge Hughes, followed his father's footsteps in farming. Not only was her father a farmer and landowner, but her grandparents and great-grandparents were as well.

Many of the things she experienced as a young girl have had a far-reaching impact. "My young life was spent in the state of Alabama during the era of legal racial segregation," she said. "Among the unpleasant and oppressive memories I have are the requirement to drink from the 'colored' water fountains, sit in the galley of the movie theater for an occasional movie, await the books in my classroom that were handed down from the white schools and walk many miles to school while the relatively empty buses transported white students. I also have memories of the Ku Klux Klan marching, wearing white sheets and burning crosses. Such external symbols were meant to intimidate and debilitate members of my race."



She says that she always knew that she would be an educator, partly because she was surrounded by family who were teachers but also because she shared the same passion for higher learning. Her family gave her the tools and she used them.

"My immediate family and extended family were strong buffers, giving my eight siblings and me love and assurance that we were as good as our oppressors and intellectually and morally superior," she said. "We were taught not to hate anyone, but to love and assist others regardless of race, gender, religious affiliation and economic status."

She obtained her education at Tuskegee University, New York University and Columbia University. She received her Ph.D. in Counseling and Administration from Florida State University and has pursued post-doctoral study at three Harvard University Summer Institutes.

"I did not know that a college education was a choice. I thought it was a mandate," Hughes said. "Thus, upon graduating from high school, college followed. It was an automatic next step for me to enter graduate school."

Dr. Hughes' road to success began in 1971 as an associate professor at Eckerd College in St. Petersburg, Florida. A year later she became the Professor and Counselor at San Diego State University and then the director of counseling services and placement at the college up until 1986 when she took the Associate Vice President for Student Affairs position at Arizona State University. From there she moved on to be the Vice President for Student Affairs, Professor of Counselor and Human Services Education at The University of Toledo, then became the Vice President/Vice Provost and Professor of Educational Psychology at the University of Minnesota. In 1994 she was offered the opportunity to be the President and Professor of Psychology at CSUS and is still chief officer of the university. At the end of this school year she will retire to begin a new (and yet to be determined) chapter of her life.

During her career, Dr. Hughes has conducted research projects, has been published numerous times and has been actively involved in professional associations. She has made hundreds of presentations to audiences and has given keynote addresses in not only the United States but in Austria, South Africa, Costa Rica, Russia, Lithuania, China, Bermuda, Jordan, the Emirates and Ethiopia.

Dr. Hughes also contributed her thoughts to President Clinton and Vice President Gore to inaugurate the federal initiative, High Hopes for College for America's Youth.

"I had the privilege to be in the audience with President Clinton on a few occasions," Hughes said. "I consulted with him and with Vice President Al Gore when he announced the federal initiative. I was in the right circle led by one of my CSU colleagues and other national professionals. This culminated in a visit to the White House, where a very small group celebrated with the President and the Vice President the accomplishment of the mission for High Hopes scholars. It was exciting to positively impact lives on a national level."

Working hard in and out of the country, some of Dr. Hughes' most successful programs include: the winter term immersion program in Cuernavaca, Mexico, the Cohort partnership exchange program with selected CSUS College of Business Administration students and their counterparts from the Université de Cergy-Pontoise in Paris, France, Exchange programs with Hogeschool Haarlem in the Netherlands and Hansoo University in Korea, a Partnership with the University of the Azores, and Evolving relationships at Tamkang University and the Taipei Municipal Teachers College in Taiwan.

"Globalization of education is essential to our future economically, politically and intellectually," she said. "Although it has been difficult, I have made numerous efforts to expose our students and faculty to the highest quality of educational exchange opportunities in other countries."

Hughes initiated and served as founding American President in the global partnerships with the Arab American University in Jenin (Palestinian Territory) in 1995, the American University in Ethiopia (Addis Ababa) in 1997, Hansoo University in South Korea in 1997, Evora University in Portugal in 1999, The University of the Azores in 2001 and Tamkang University in Taiwan in 2002.

"Perhaps the most novel program is the Arab American University located in Jenin in the Palestinian territories," Hughes said. "We started that program. Today, it is the only university in the Palestinian territory and is one of the most beautiful facilities. During all the conflicts in this territory, the rioters have not targeted the campus for destruction. Students continue to attend the University."

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“Too often, people are appointed to positions where they can make a difference, but they forget about those who are left behind and neglect the opportunity to help others,” Hughes said. “Sometimes they introduce the wrong kind of change. I have always leveraged my position to assure equal opportunity for education for everyone.”



She was also selected by her peers to go to the President-to-Presidents Lecture in Puerto Rico.

“Given that only one person per year is selected nationally, I deemed it a very special honor to present to my presidential colleagues in Puerto Rico. There are more than 600 eligible presidents and only a handful will have such a privilege. I feel blessed,” she said.

She has given a number of international speeches where she has touched the lives of citizens in the Great Hall of the People in Beijing and twice for the People’s Republic of China.

This female role model has lead many organizations that have an emphasis on education for women and minorities, including being the chair of the national group of University Women Presidents. Dr. Hughes is also on the First National Women’s Museum Advisory Board, is a member of the Women’s Commis-

sion for the American Council on Education (ACE) and is the chair of the national group of African American Presidents.

“The role of Chair of the national African American Presidents group places me in a unique position to address the diminishing number of university presidents who are African Americans, women and from other underrepresented groups,” she said.

Five of the African American presidents developed an initiative that became the Millennium Leadership Institute (MLI). Hughes serves as the volunteer coordinator and planner of this program that enrolls 30 participants a year to train them for presidency. Currently, 20 participants have been appointed president of major universities.

“I am motivated when there is a public service to be done and I have the expertise to lead or participate. It is especially gratifying when these tasks relate to promotional opportunity

for the public good. In such circumstances I have boundless energy and generosity. The public service values inherited from my family inspire me to be a public servant,” she said.

One of her current areas of concern is the Stockton Eighth Grade Initiative. She hopes to address the low college-going rate in Stockton by targeting eighth-grade students, engaging their parents in training programs and encouraging them to select the college admission curriculum. They are automatically admitted with a full-tuition scholarship to CSUS by complying.

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She says the first and most important factor in improving education is to provide adequate funding, adding that education must focus on teaching students how to learn rather than emphasizing skills in test-taking. She thinks it is essential that education does not become a political agenda.

“My work has been fulfilling and I hope the Valley reaps enormous benefits,” Hughes said. “My future goals will always focus on leadership in areas that advance society and serve the public. I will always search for ways to do this.”

She is still trying hard to build an American university in Ethiopia, even though, for now there are no resources. She says that there is a country more in need of higher education and she will continue to pursue this goal.

Hughes is a mover, a shaker, a mom to her 35-year-old son, Jan, and wife to her husband David Brinks. She enjoys music, reading and facing diversity for the good of all. She is a strong believer in equality and even though she is retiring from CSUS, her educational goals will live on in all that she has touched.

“Education provides the intellectual development and stimulation for society,” she said. “An educated society builds a strong economy; therefore, society must invest in the future by educating the young and the old. The concept of educating the old refers to the necessity to encourage citizens to honor lifelong learning.”



CSU Stanislaus Campus. Photo by George Owings