

USAF Vet and PCCC Student Delivers Powerful Veterans Day Message

Posted November 11, 2013



In a powerful and autobiographical speech at the PCCC Veterans Day Luncheon, Marcenia B. Cofield praised her fellow veterans while issuing a passionate call for action to resolve injustices plaguing veterans today.

“We accepted the call to be part of something bigger than ourselves,” said Marcenia, inviting other veterans in the audience to stand and be recognized for their “courage, integrity, and unselfish service.”

She also urged those present to stand up for “reducing barriers and improving access to services for veterans,” particularly the homeless and those who suffered military sexual trauma (MST).

“One in five women and one in 100 men experience MST in active duty or training,” said Marcenia, a victim herself.

Commissioned as a second lieutenant in the United States Air Force in 1983, Marcenia served as a Personnel and Casualty Notification Officer and is now a member of numerous military organizations, including the Military Officers of American, Air Force Association, National Association of Black Veterans and American Legion. She is also president of the PCCC Veterans Club.

During her service, Marcenia was sexually harassed and assaulted by a member of her own team. “I still recall the face, the smells, the unwanted touches,” she said to an engrossed audience. Like many other MST victims, she did not report the incident out of shame and fear of harming the team. “I am in therapy now, but my recovery will be lifelong,” said the veteran.

Noting that MST and homelessness often go hand-in-hand, Marcenia proposed a broad solution of “supported housing with intense support services for vets.” Locally, she established Roots and Wings, a non-profit organization to help homeless veterans, and she urged PCCC vets to come to the College’s Veterans Club for advice and support if they cannot get access to city or county services.

A graduate of North Carolina A&T State University with a teaching background, Marcenia is now an education major at PCCC, but said her “days in the classroom are over.” The activist now seeks a master’s degree and aims to “work within the community to assist underprivileged youth in educational matters.”

*This event was sponsored by the Student Programming Committee
of the PCCC Student Government Association.*