**2015 HALL OF FAME EVENT ADDRESS AT GATEWAY COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

**By**

**NAOMI ETOMBI MOUSSA**

Distinguished Guests Ladies and Gentlemen Dr. Kendrick, Good evening It is an honor and a privilege for me to stand here to address this beautiful audience at the 2015 Hall of Fame event at Gateway Community College. My name is Naomi Moussa and I have been asked to share my story with all of you. My story is like so many at Gateway. I was born and raised in Cameroon --- a beautiful country in the Central part of Africa. My single mother raised six kids exceptionally well! I was the second youngest. Each day when she gave me a loving hug, I saw strength, confidence, courage and above all I saw a conqueror in my mum! If there is one thing I learned from my mother that I uphold to this day, is the power of an educated mind! She lead by example…she was a biology teacher at a high school…and now she is the principal. She impressed upon all of us the importance of a good education. Relocating to the USA in August of 2013 as a permanent resident I had to define what the American Dream meant to me. I believe it means pursing a good education as soon as possible and making maximum use of the opportunities the land of opportunities has to offer, and positively impacting my peers! With this drive and positive energy to succeed, I enrolled in Gateway Community College; the college I call “A Cradle for Academic Transformation”. GCC under the distinguished leadership of its President Dr. Kendrick, has an outstanding teaching staff that builds the minds of the students. GCC embraces diversity and has a wide variety of students from all parts of the world and all status in different circles of life. White Americans, African Americans, Africans, Hispanics, Chinese, Koreans, veterans, senior citizens, students with disabilities, and students like me who leave our countries in search of greener pastures and to pursue a good education. It’s not just about pursing a good education but the moral values and standards we uphold are very crucial to our success in life. Our academic qualifications and skills give us the jobs we need but our character, attitude and the manner in which we carry ourselves keeps us employed. The moral lesson of respect we’ve been taught on this campus from the president of the school Dr. Kendrick to the maintainers who clean the restrooms --- everybody is so important in the great circle of life. The other values of hard work and integrity have been instilled in us during our education at here at Gateway. Because of the foundation Gateway Community College set for me, I was able to have outstanding experiences; I worked in school as a work study 15 hours a week in the financial aid office with my awesome supervisors Ray Zeek, Omar Livingston and Nancy Robinson. I volunteered for eight months at Yale New Haven Hospital for at least four hours a week. I made an effort to network, getting to know one or two people and seizing the day because there is never a second chance in life to create a first impression. I remember days I went without lunch, eating a decent breakfast and a good dinner because I wanted to save money to pay a bill on time! In October 2014, I volunteered to usher at the 2014 Hall of fame event --- to me this was an opportunity to network and get to know people. In December 2014, I was one of the students in the panel that spoke at the press conference with Congress woman ROSA DELAURO on President Barack Obama’s Act to make community colleges in the USA free. In February 2015, I happily and proudly represented Gateway Community College at the Legislative Building as hundreds of students rallied peacefully to protest against significant cuts in the budget for higher education and I was even interviewed on Fox News that night! I represented Gateway at the Board of Regents in March 2015 and I formed the African Students Association and was elected first president of the ASO. I was chosen with a few other students at GCC to be in a pilot Mentoring program last Spring. The mentors and mentees program gave me a wonderful opportunity to network and I had the opportunity to attend the investiture of Allen Bolden as a U.S. District judge thanks to my mentor Ms. Elsie Chapman! All of this I was able to do because of the outstanding foundation GCC instilled in me. I applied for the Gateway Foundation Scholarships and I was awarded two scholarships; Williams Service-Learning Scholarship and Jason Richardson Scholarship awards. This helped contribute towards my tuition and my books and supplies. I am also one of the students who benefitted from the Alexion Student Monthly Bus pass scholarship because I rode the bus to school weekly. Thanks to all of you, our Foundation Donors, who see the need to bless the lives of our Gateway students, and help them pursue a good education with as little debt as possible. With that support I finished and got my associates degree in Liberal Arts and Sciences in 3 semesters! I understood where I came from and I now know where I am going! I graduated in May of 2015. When I was finishing school my cousin called me. He lives in Texas and is an accountant. He said there was a summer job as a Tax Assistant with his company paying more than $25 dollars an hour. I moved to Houston, Texas, and worked hard all summer. I was offered and I accepted a full-time position with this accounting firm including medical benefits. I was also accepted in to the University of Houston Downtown Texas campus. This fall semester I am a Business Administration major and an International Business Minor. My dream is to become a U.S. Judge and I visualize that in my future. I asked Dean Cody if I could come back and speak at Hall of Fame. Gateway has brought out so much potential in me. There are many students who go to school here every day with challenges. I now see the need to donate scholarships for students in my Alma Mater --- not because I am the richest person in the world but because I understand and feel the pain of being in need. Thank you scholarship donors for positively impacting our lives, thank you Gateway foundation for the thousands of lives you inspire each year with the scholarship awards.

Long live the hall of Fame Event, Long live Gateway Foundation Donors, Long Live Gateway Community College, God Bless the United States of America!