

**HUMAN RIGHTS LECTURE SERIES AT SOKA UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA,
CALABASAS
FORMER U.S. SURGEON GENERAL LECTURES AT SUA, CALABASAS
BY MARK KORAL, LOS ANGELES CORRESPONDENT**

On Feb. 28, the Human Rights Lecture Series at Soka University of America's Calabasas campus welcomed M. Joycelyn Elders, M.D., the first African American and second woman to hold the post of surgeon general of the United States. Dr. Elders is also a renowned lecturer and the author of *From Sharecropper's Daughter to Surgeon General of the United States*. She is the recipient of many awards including the Dr. Nathan Davis Award and the National Coalition of 100 Black Women's Candace Award for Health Science.

During the U.S. Senate hearings on her confirmation as surgeon general in 1993, Dr. Elders commented: "I want to change the way we think about health by putting prevention first. I want to be the voice and vision of the poor and powerless. I want to change concern about social problems that affect health into commitment. And I would like to make every child born in America a wanted child."

In her human rights lecture on "Education and Personal Responsibility," Dr. Elders spoke about giving priority to public health education programs to the young and poor. She remarked that every U.S. president has been an "education president." But now it's time that we, the people, begin to make our leaders live up to what they say they'll do.

Dr. Elders told the audience that if "we don't like the direction things are going, then we, ourselves, have to get up, get involved and make sure our politicians become the kinds of leaders we want and do what we want done. We want to make sure we protect the most valuable resource we will ever have, our children, and make sure they are healthy, educated, motivated and that they have hope for the future." Dr. Elders urged that in order for a revolution to occur in our society—that is, to have the kind of society we say we want—each of us needs to be present at the table, to speak up and be part of the decision-making process.

She went on to say that "for democracy to continue in this country, we must overcome the ignorance that endangers it. We need to teach our young people about responsibility for self, for others and for the community. To make a difference in our society, we have to become more responsible as a society."

Dr. Elders told the students, "When you complete your studies, please take with you four things: first, keep a voice in your ear that can hear all the people who are less fortunate than you—the people who are suffering, people who need your help—so that when you are making decisions for the 21st century you will hear their voices; second, keep a vision in your eyes that extends much further than your eyes can see; third, have a diploma in your hand, and; fourth, keep a song in your heart to deal with the difficult problems that will come before you."

Dr. Elders shared her view that "we've got to have comprehensive healthcare education programs in our schools from kindergarten to 12th grade. If we have the schools teaching reading, writing and arithmetic, why not also have them teach the students to be physically, emotionally and psychologically fit? What good does it do for them to be experts in physics and calculus if they don't know how to care for their physical and psychological health?"

She told the audience her mother gave her four gifts of wisdom that has served her well throughout life, especially during the most difficult and trying times: "Always do your

best; that's good enough. Don't throw away tomorrow by worrying about yesterday. Recognize the truth and speak out against wrongdoing. If you want to get out of the cotton fields, get something in your head." Dr. Elders concluded by quoting Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., who said, "Be something, do something and leave something."

From its inception in 1992, SUA's Human Rights Lecture Series has provided a forum for dozens of nationally and internationally renowned speakers to address issues relating to peace, social justice and societal reform. For more information on the Human Rights Lecture Series, which is free and open to the public, please contact Deborah diCesare in SUA's Calabasas Program Development Office at 818-878-3780.