

CELEBRATING BLACK HISTORY

By DJ Montoya, 1st Space Brigade
Photos by Craig Denton, U.S. Air Force



Dr. La Vonne I. Neal, guest speaker, addresses the crowd during the USASMDC/ARSTRAT Black History Month Observance.

PETERSON AIR FORCE BASE, Colo. — A packed crowd of Soldiers, Civilians, and Contractors listened intently as BG Kurt S. Story enlightened them with a bit of history about the Army's first black female CSM Mildred C. Kelly. Story, Deputy Commanding General for Operations, U.S. Army Space and Missile Defense Command/ Army Forces Strategic Command spoke to the attentive crowd on the morning of Feb. 18, as the command's annual Black History Month Observance was celebrated in the training rooms of Building 3.



Dr. La Vonne I. Neal (far left) is served by Norma Jenkins (far right) from the command's G2 section during the ethnic tasting portion of the observance.

Kelly became the first black female sergeant major in the Army while serving at the Pentagon in 1972. She achieved another first two years later when she became the first female command sergeant major at a major installation.

“She blazed the trail for all of us here today,” said Story.

Story also pointed to Army Space Soldiers today who are continuing the tradition such as CPT Tilisha Lockley, commander of Bravo Company, 53rd Signal Battalion and SGT Tomekia N. Brevard from 2nd Space Company, who recently returned from in theater with Army Space Support Team 2.

Next, guest speaker, Dr. La Vonne I. Neal, Dean - College of Education at the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs, took center stage and began with a brief explanation of her job.

“A dean is a university officer and third in command at the university,” said Neal.

“I have four academic departments under my control including, teaching, special education, counseling, and leadership. One of the hallmarks of our program is culturally responsive teaching, leadership, and counseling. That is one of the main ingredients of our program. I am responsible for making sure all of our personnel are culturally responsive.”

As a former Army captain, Dean tailored her instruction of the Black History theme using cross cultural confidence while discussing its evolution as well as that of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Black History Week/Month, and the National Urban League. But more specifically she touched upon the correlation between education and economics.

“One of the many reasons you are here today is to focus and be a part of that cross-cultural competence experience. What you learn here today will help you understand some of the epistemology and the way of knowing of individuals who are culturally and linguistically diverse.”

In addition to Dr. Neal’s speech SGM Marcus Campbell from the 1st Space Brigade S3 section recited President Obama’s Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech, and Omoyemen Eyekhobhelo, a local Colorado Springs resident, displayed her Black Art collection. Ruth Steele, director of the Martin Luther King Jr., museum in Pueblo, Colo., was also in attendance. ▲



Left to right: Holly Story, Dr. La Vonne I. Neal and Omoyemen Eyekhobhelo listen to BG Kurt Story’s opening remarks during the U.S. Army Space and Missile Defense Command/Army Forces Strategic Command’s Black History Month Observance.