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# D A T E L I N E

## DOMINGUEZ HILLS

Weekly news for the CSU Dominguez Hills community



◀ Photo courtesy of Robyn McGee

## FACULTY/STAFF NEWS

### Robyn McGee: New Author Tackles Weighty Issues

**Robyn McGee** (Class of '01, M.A., Humanities), *director*, Women's Resource Center, has written her first book, *Hungry For More: A Keeping-It-Real Guide for Black Women on Weight and Body Image* (Emeryville: Seal Press, 2005). This is her first book. Her decision to write about the dangers of extreme weight loss techniques stemmed from the loss of her sister, who died in 2001 from complications following gastric bypass surgery.

"I remember when we were kids, she would always be worried about her weight, she would always be on a diet," she recalls. "If you saw her, she was not way overweight, but was built like many black women. I attended a writers' conference shortly thereafter and was talking to some of the writers there, and they said, 'You've got a real story here, you've got to tell it.'"

McGee's unflinching approach to a sensitive topic encourages women to exhaust all options first before deciding on weight loss surgery.

"People see this as a quick fix, when in actuality, it takes a lifetime of behavior modification," she points out. "Think about perhaps Weight Watchers, or that maybe you have an eating disorder. There are other things you can do before you make the call. But really research it and understand that your behavior after the surgery has to change as well. You have to change your eating habits and exercise to keep the weight off, or you'll gain the weight back."

McGee underscores the socioeconomic factors that contribute to obesity in African American and Latino populations.

"There tends to be a relationship between economics and the way people eat," she says. "Maybe you don't have the budget to buy fresh fish and vegetables, but you do have money to buy something quick to feed the whole family. A family of five will take their kids to McDonald's for Fish Friday. That feeds the family, but it's not nutritious and it's fattening."

According to McGee, the sedentary lifestyle of American children and teenagers, as well as the growing dangers that face young people in the streets are factors in an obesity problem that threatens the younger generation with a shorter life span than their parents.

"Our kids are overweight. That's across the board, it's not just children of color," she says. "It's the fast food, we 'Super-Size' everything. They're the video game generation, many of these kids are not physically active. It's hard for parents to let their kids play outside, because of the fear of something bad happening to them. We used to play outside until nine at night, it was not a problem. But today, you wouldn't do that with your kids."

A contributor to *Seventeen*, *Fireweed*, and *The Black World Today*, McGee counsels parents on the ability to encourage self-esteem for young women while teaching health conscious approaches to maintaining weight.



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"When you talk about kids, you have to talk about their parents," she notes. "If you're a woman who hasn't worked through those issues yourself, and you're constantly dieting, looking in the mirror and wanting plastic surgery, your daughter is going to pick up on that. You need to be happy with yourself so you can convey those values to your daughter, so when she sees someone on TV, she can say, 'They're pretty, but I'm pretty too. I can work out and eat right and I don't have to look like somebody else.'"

McGee emphasizes that the cultural appreciation of fuller figured women in the African American community is changing, resulting in a desire on the part of women to emulate an unrealistic ideal that is touted by the media.

"We don't see a variety of images of black women in movies or TV," McGee says. "There seems to be this one image of what a black woman should look like, tall, thin, light-skinned, energetic, and she gets the guy. That's kind of the image that we're fed. So a lot of women say, 'She seems to have it going on, I want to look like that too.'"

McGee underscores the importance of a healthy self-image that enables one to accept physical flaws and capitalize on more meaningful definitions of inner and outer beauty.

"In my family, there were six girls and one boy," she says. "We were always taught that if you can develop yourself intellectually, that was all that you needed. There wasn't a lot of emphasis on what you looked like, so that's why I always wondered what happened to Cathy, why she was always so concerned about her weight and size.

"She was married, had four kids, and her own business. She was successful, but she was never happy. So when she heard about this surgery, she thought, 'Finally, the end of my weight battle.' So she kind of rushed into it."

McGee hopes that her book will "let people know that first, you accept yourself for who you are, love yourself for who you are.

"We all need to make improvements, I struggle with it too. But you need to accept yourself first. Otherwise, you're going to be going through life looking for these quick fixes to match some image and you're never to be happy."

*Hungry For More: A Keeping-It-Real Guide for Black Women on Weight and Body Image* will be released in December; for more information, visit [www.robynwrites.com](http://www.robynwrites.com). For information on "Love Your Body Day," contact the Women's Resource Center, (310) 243-2486.

-Joanie Harmon

