

1-person show marks Women's History Month

PLANT CITY - An "edutainer" from Houston delivers with an act that entertains and educates.

By **KARLAYNE R. PARKER**
of The Tampa Tribune

With African garb from head to toe, Kijana Wiseman sings "Kum Ba Yah" as she shakes a sasa instrument and dances down to center stage at the auditorium at Hillsborough Community College's Plant City campus.

She rarely stayed there though. Instead, for more than 90 minutes, she engaged, encouraged, joked and even sat with her audience.

Her act, "The 'Griot,'" was part of HCC's celebration of Women's History month during March, which focused on the accomplishments of women.

Wiseman's one-woman performance did just that and particularly honed in on the achievements of black women.

Peppered with a little political satire, history and personal experience, Wiseman took her audience from the beginning of time with the first wedding of the "whole world" in Africa to the present with song.

The audience learned an African "click" song, which involves the clicking of the tongue against the teeth.

"We are going to Mama Tiemba's wedding" in Africa, she said. Her show is full of imagery, imaginary friends including a bird named "Shakka," and "Master," what a white man who owned slaves was called.

She took the audience from the wedding to the life of a slave, a choir director and vaudeville and Jazz singer by using song and the back wall of center stage as a canvas for slide projector scenes of people, places and images.

The audience participated as the church choir and at times was involved in a question and answer dialogue of sorts.

All the while Wiseman shifted genres and characters by peeling off layers of clothing.

"Say No-o," as she coaches the audience to respond to questions with a gesture of a hand and a snaking of the neck. "This should be easy. There's 'Say No to Drugs' and say no to Monica [Lewinsky]. Uh, Oh, sorry."

The audience laughs.

With emphasis on her "paint job" or color, Wiseman tells stories of her personal experience with gender equality, life and death, crime and racism. From time to time, she'd include an original poem.

Wiseman, said her shows are meant to educate and to entertain. She calls herself an "edutainer."

She hits on topics that are common to all people, said Claire Jordan, student activities adviser for HCC's Plant City campus. "It never hurts to hear it in a different way," Jordan said.

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DAVE GEIGER/Tribune photos

Kijana Wiseman performs her "edutainment show as "The Griot" at HCC, taking her audience on a trip through time and changing costumes by peeling off layers of clothing.

