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Mogul shares insights with high school students



When real estate mogul R. Donahue Peebles addressed students at the Universal Auden Reid Charter High School, he honed in on the tenets of achieving success.

As the owner of The Peebles Corporation, Peebles heads the country's largest African-American real estate development company, with a multibillion dollar development portfolio of luxury hotels, high rise residential and commercial properties and developments in Washington, D.C., Las Vegas and Miami Beach.

Hard work, drive and the determination to succeed were key aspects in propelling Peebles to become one of the nation's most successful entrepreneurs. In May 2009, Forbes magazine listed Peebles in the top 10 of the wealthiest Black Americans in the country.

"I've been doing business as if my life depends on it. To be successful, you almost have to be single minded in your goal," he told the students.

The Washington, D.C. native comes from humble beginnings. His mother was a secretary and his father was a mechanic — however they encouraged him to "dream big."

Early on, Peebles aspired to be an entrepreneur, and his mother encouraged him by ensuring that he was exposed to other successful African Americans.

His first foray into the world of real estate came at the age of 19. At the age of 26, Peebles sealed his first major real estate deal and became a multimillionaire. One of the pivotal moments in Peebles' career came in 1995, when a \$45 million dollar deal fell through in Washington, D.C. However, he didn't let that set him back. In 1996, he won the rights to



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develop the Royal Palm Hotel on South Beach, making it the first 100 percent African American-owned and developed luxury resort in the country. The hotel deal was the key concession that ended a three-year Black tourist boycott of Miami-Dade County, Florida. Some viewed him as an outsider, and didn't want him to have the hotel deal.

"Setbacks are opportunities in disguise. If it wasn't for me willing to keep pushing, I wouldn't have been successful," Peebles pointed out.

"There is a direct correlation between effort and results. It's that simple. If you're lazy, you'll get lazy results. If you work hard, you'll get hard work results," Peebles said during a question and answer segment.

He also noted that perception impacts one's ability to be judged by others.

"How we conduct ourselves and project ourselves is how the world perceives us. Whatever impression you're giving out, that's how you'll be judged," Peebles said.

"It's through how you project yourself that the world is going to judge you, and we live in a very judgmental society."

Peebles' address was a part of the "Success Speaks" lecture series hosted by the Community Angel Foundation. Founded by Veniece Newton, the foundation invites prominent business leaders to address students and guide them on their personal paths to success. Through the organization, students are exposed to leaders in various fields of business from around the country, providing them with key insights into ways to excel in life.

"In today's fast paced reality world that kids live in, it tends to overshadow the value of hard work and perseverance in becoming successful. We want to show students alternative ways of becoming successful and obtaining greater wealth beyond what they see on television. We hope this translates to a more successful student," said Newton.