

Iota Phi Lambda Sorority, Inc.
FOUNDER'S DAY MESSAGE
June 2014

*“A United Sisterhood of Business and Professional Women
Striving for Economic Empowerment”*

Dear Sorors:

Several years ago, playwright and novelist Pearl Cleage wrote a book titled *We Speak Your Names*, which expressed a collective thank-you to our symbolic foremothers. My thoughts return to this book today as we celebrate 85 years as a sorority of business and professional women. On this day, we pay tribute to those seven remarkable women who were Iota's foremothers. They had the vision, courage and resilience to step out on faith—and today, we **speak their names**. We honor them for being trailblazers who paved the way and set an example for us. Now, we continue in their footsteps by picking up the mantle they passed on to us and running with it.

Of course, our founder, Lola M. Parker, was foremost among those trailblazers. Born in Little Rock, Arkansas, and raised in Kansas City, Missouri, she arrived in Chicago in 1919. In that city of big shoulders, Soror Parker's ambitions led her to further her education and ultimately shaped her vision of a sorority designed to foster the interests of business women. That sorority would be called Iota Phi Lambda.

In our 85th year, as I've traveled around the country attending each of the regional conferences, my message to sorors focused on commitment, real commitment. I used the slogan **“Yes we can and yes we will,”** and suggested each region adopt this phrase as a motto in our personal lives and for our individual chapters. Real commitment will take us to the heights we want to achieve and enable us to accomplish the goals we have set for our sorority.

Sorors, I challenge you today to renew your commitment to the ideals of friendship and love that Soror Parker chose to express the attributes of our sorority. I believe Soror Parker would challenge us today to renew our commitment to our communities by standing up for our beliefs and convictions, and working to alleviate poverty, teen pregnancy and school dropout rates. I further believe she would challenge us to speak out against the injustices that exist here in our country and around the world. She would dare us to do all that we can to help educate all children and to raise our voices against those who try to block our girls from getting an education.

So today, as we celebrate our 85th anniversary, we speak the names of Sorors Lola M. Parker, Ethel T. Edwards, Mildred G. Hardin, Harriet M. Robinson, Ophelia Harrison, Birdette Trigg, and Marjorie Tyndall. To paraphrase Pearl Cleage, we thank them for the dues they paid, we thank them for showing us how to fly by flying, and we thank them for our wings.

Sisterly,

Phyllis H. Shumate

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21st National President