

IOTA PHI LAMBDA SORORITY, INC.



“Business and Professional Women Building the Foundation for Generational Financial Empowerment”

Sorors, today is Founder’s Day and I would like to tell you a story. This is the story of a young woman named Lola. Lola was born in the early 1900s in Arkansas, later she moved to Kansas City, MO and in 1919 she, along with her parents moved to Chicago. Instead of becoming a nurse or a teacher, as was the norm during that time, she aspired to become a businesswoman. So, after high school, she chose to attend a business college. During that time women who chose to enter the business field, were belittled and thought to be less than. The implication was that these women had less education and ability, because few of them went beyond high school business classes. While working as a secretary, Lola experienced the lack of respect for women in her field and she decided to do something about it. With encouragement from her employer, Dr. L. K. Williams, President of the National Baptist Convention and others, Lola called to together six of her best friends to put in place her vision of raising the status of businesswomen and to increase their prestige and influence among women in other professions and in the arts. So, she along with her six friends discussed the formation of an organization that would inspire higher education, business specializations, and give assistance to young women engaged in business. Thus, on June 1, 1929, Alpha Chapter of Iota Phi Lambda Sorority, Inc. was formed. Because Soror Parker saw what could be, she created this organization that continues to offer encouragement to other young women to upgrade their skills so they will be ready to accept opportunities when they come. Lola served as a role model for these young women by continuing her education, taking courses in business administration, business psychology, etc. As she increased her knowledge, Lola’s positions also rose in prestige and influence. In other words, she practiced what she preached. Today, we are also confronted with many obstacles due to the Covid-19 Pandemic and a changing world. Our professional and personal lives have been turned upside down by the effects of this very serious virus. We are working from home and we are separated from family members and friends. We are dealing with death and emotional stress due to the inability to share emotions and offer comfort to each other. We are worried that we may or may not have a job when this is over. We wonder if we will ever be able to get back to normal or will there be a new normal and what will it look like.

As an organization, the pandemic also affected our ability to meet, to plan and to present the programs of Iota. Together, we have faced these obstacles and found ways to continue to offer

the programs of Iota through different avenues, such as social media, teleconferencing and virtual meetings. Like our founder, Mrs. Lola M. Parker, we saw a need to adapt to the present situation, to make changes to improve the delivery of our message. So, we embraced the new norm of Webinars, Facebook Live and YouTube presentations. Our charitable arm, the Lola M. Parker Foundation, is offering a series of webinars that we hope you will take advantage of during the next three weeks. Iota is reinstating the Iota Relief Fund, established in 1937, to help small businesses in our communities. We ask for your support in funding this initiative. In addition, for the first time in our history, we will host our regional conferences, virtually.

Each Founder's Day serves as the end of one chapter and the beginning of another. As we write those chapters, it gives us an opportunity to revisit the events of that year, to reflect on our programs and project and to become reinvigorated as we look toward the future. We look at those events and wonder if we made the right decisions, if we could have planned better, were the events worthwhile, did we accomplish our goals and did we take advantage of the opportunities that came our way? Did we make our founder proud? Did we advance the goals and aims of Iota? So, yes, I think Lola is looking down today and saying, job well done! She and her friends saw what could be in 1929 when they created this organization. Today we continue their dream for Iota. We celebrated the achievement of many Sorors who earned advance degrees this year. We produced some outstanding and creative programs that increased the knowledge of our membership and the community. We embraced the national theme, "Business and Professional Women Building the Foundation for Generational Financial Empowerment" by hosting some very informative financial webinars and programs. When we look back on our history, we will see that this year's chapter will show that we met the challenges, achieved our goals and advanced our knowledge. So, thank you, Lola, for your foresight and vision as we continue to carry out your dream of a strong invaluable organization. As we go forward in life and as an organization, we will continue to face many challenges and obstacles. But we will hold on to the vision of Lola and continue to nurture and encourage that vision. We will continue to make a difference in our communities and stay rooted in the aims and ideals of Iota Phi Lambda Sorority, Inc., even in difficult times. So, to all my sisters, I wish you a happy 91st Founder's Day and a bright and wonderful future!

Dorothy M. White
23rd National President