

Keynote Transcripts, Position Papers & Presentations

The Links, Incorporated

“Salt of the Earth”

Link Jeannine Quick-Frasier
Central Area Director

The White Rose Banquet, the culminating event of this, the 38th Central Area Conference. The meetings, plenary sessions, the workshops, community outreach event, the luncheons, special evening activities are all but a memory now.

These four days have given you the opportunity to re-establish friendships, meet Links from across the Area, engage in meaningful discussions, formulate ideas for strengthening your chapter's programming efforts. For some, this was a reminder that there is more to Linkdom than what exists at the chapter level and that we are all connected to the whole. For some, this meant a re-energizing of spirit, of purpose, of focus which will transform to a recommitment to the work of the chapter. From my observations, I would say Central Area is on a high note.

But now what? As we prepare to leave this place and return to the comfort of home and family, now what? In the days ahead, when we find ourselves drawn back into feelings of complacency and the chapter discussions begin to wander away from substance and purpose, what then? When the demands of time and service begin to feel heavy and overwhelming, what then?

My sisters, never underestimate the value of you. As you reach out to our children, as you tutor, mentor, engage them in cultural activities; as you reach out to our women in teaching them about nutrition,

economic strategies, being responsible parents; as you reach out across the waters through the Maama Kits, the sending of books, school supplies, dolls, as you advocate, commiserate, and deliberate about our wants and needs to the powers that be, never underestimate the significance of what you do.

Let me remind you, no one can touch what we do, individually and collectively. We may never get the full picture or appreciation of what our presence means. All you sometimes need to do is look into the eyes of a child or hold the hand of the elderly to get a sense of our effect on others.

I had the opportunity to tour a school with members of a Chapter. As soon as these women walked into a classroom, decorum broke down when some of the children rushed into the arms of these Link Sisters. I have seen teenage young men stand taller, heads higher as they were honored at an awards ceremony. I have seen adults smile with delight when the blood sugar check read “normal.” I have heard teachers ask “when are you coming back?” at the conclusion of a service initiative. I have read thank you notes from our artists thanking a chapter for recognizing them in their own community; thus bringing a different dimension of validation to their work. As, we as an Area, continue to push the health initiatives and look for ways to add our voices to the discussions of health disparities, ah, my sisters, we bring credence, credibility, and value to the table.



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You see, it is really very simple. Lest you underestimate your worth, you are, indeed, and I know of no better way to say it, the salt of the earth. There is no better analogy than that. I do not mean to turn this into an ecumenical moment; I am just stating fact, as I see it. Salt does three things...

First, it brings out the flavor, the hidden quality or enhances what is there. In our walk of service, we have the capacity and capability of bringing out the best in people – and even in ourselves. Through the passions of our hearts, we can draw out the hidden talents in children, engage the often silent teenager in meaningful dialogue. We can pull opposing sectors in our community to work on solutions to an issue. By the end of the evening, we have stirred the disjointed conversation into a blend of meaningful outcomes.

Second, salt has the property to melt, to transform into a different state of being. Isn't that what you do also? You find ways to bring down barriers, systemic and emotional. Remember our support of Kendra Smith through the Legal Defense Fund? Think on how many times you have begun your program with young people. They were slouched down in chairs, sitting with arms crossed, children hesitant to speak. But by the end of the session, an environment of trust and acceptance had taken hold. You were responsible for melting away the walls of resistance, self-consciousness, and disbelief.

Third, salt preserves. We are always centered and focused on telling and retelling the story of people of African descent. It bears repeating lest the voices cease and our history becomes relegated to footnotes. Isn't that why many of you honor the brightest and best in your

communities - those who have made an indelible imprint upon the place you call home. Isn't that why we provide opportunities for our young to meet those who can bring our history to life? We preserve the past so our present will have a future founded on a rich legacy in which apologies are not necessary, heads need not be bowed, but can stand toe to toe, eye to eye and know, with confidence, what we as a people have contributed to this world.

So, my sisters, when your vision becomes a bit blurred or when the shoulders begin to droop or when the heart gets a little faint, find that shaker of salt. Pour some into your hand and hold the contents out before you in your open palm. Marvel at what these small grains have the capability of doing. And then apply that wonderment to what you as Links have done individually and collectively. Continue to enhance, transform, and preserve.

What miraculous, marvelous, magnificent women you are! I feel blessed and honored to be called one of you.

Let me end this in the way my father, a Presbyterian minister, ended his sermons. As a child, I would listen for this one word "beloved." His utterance of this wonderful word signaled the conclusion of his sermons. I would lift my head from my mother's lap and look like I had been alert the whole time. Thus, I say to you,

"Beloved", the value of YOU is inextricably linked to how you reach out and reach down to our own.

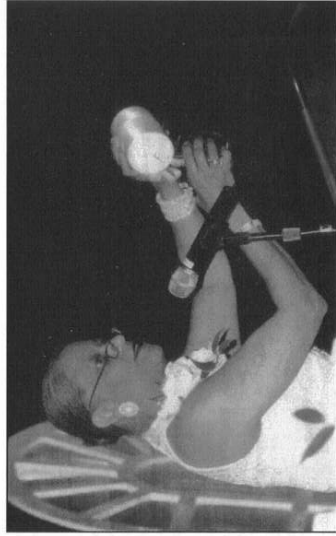


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So on this occasion of The White Rose, let us rejoice in the goodness, worth, and humanity that defines this body of sisterhood. May we gather strength from one another to continue to answer the call to serve unequivocally and unselfishly.

Pour on the salt, my Sisters. Let it flow from Nebraska to West Virginia, from Minnesota to Oklahoma, from North Dakota to Tennessee. And this we promise.



Link Jeannine Quick-Frasier, former Central Area Director, pouring on the salt at the Central Area Conference, June, 2005.

