

## **Martin Luther King Public Service Award**

**January 17<sup>th</sup> 2014**

**Lorna R. Lewis**

I am humbled to be one of the recipients of the MLK Public Service award; particularly as I review some of the recipients of prior years and the esteemed colleagues receiving the awards today. I look out into the audience and recognize some dear friends and supporters who have been the wind in my sails, (POB BOE, Fellow Superintendents, LIASCD, SCOPE, NAACP, LIBEA, Three Village teachers ) former colleagues, neighbors, friends and family. I want you all to know how much I appreciate your taking the time to be a part of this very important day for me.

An award for service speaks to my heart as I am constantly guided by the words of Shirley Chisholm, a great politician that was wise beyond her years, who became the **first African American woman elected to Congress** as well as first African American candidate for President of the United States. She said “**Service is the rent we pay for the privilege of living on this earth.**” Getting our students to embrace this concept is critical to the mission of Public Education. The prayer of St Francis which I quote daily reminds us that it is in giving that we receive.

It was Theodore Roosevelt who once said “Far and away the best prize that life has to offer is the chance to work hard at work worth doing.” I feel so fortunate to be involved in a profession, with colleagues that work tirelessly to make a difference for children. I get to engage daily in work worth doing while being supported by a Board of Education and great colleagues, many of whom are here today. Real success in life comes from finding what you love and giving yourself to it. After 30 years of being in the field of education, I can tell you that there is no better way to be of service to our community.

Even in the face of what may seem to be a public agenda to destroy public education as we know it, Educators embrace this work because we know it is the only way to impact the future. The children sitting in our K classes today will hopefully emerge successful from college by the year 2030. The

cell phone and internet that we are now so impressed with will by 2030 seem as obsolete as the vinyl record is to us now. Our task, indeed our challenge is to make them ready for the world they will inherit, equipped with the knowledge, skills and compassion to make the world a brighter, healthier future. Their world will require them to make more global connections and they will have to learn to live and embrace diversity in new and creative ways. In them is our opportunity for keeping the dream of Dr. MLK's alive. Public Education is the only avenue for delivering on this promise for tomorrow. We must be fierce warriors for its defense.

Martin Luther King once said "A nation or civilization that continues to produce soft-minded men purchases its own spiritual death on an installment plan". The work we do as educators, if done with passion and sincerity, strategically guarantees a vibrant future for our citizenry. There are no tests that will measure the real work that we must do to support the intellectual prowess of the curious minded student that will invent our way to solving the next major crisis.

Somewhere in our schools is the next leader to take the place of our beloved Martin Luther King Jr., Shirley Chisholm or Nelson Mandela. We must exercise caution to ensure that we nurture that spirit to bring out the best in all children.

It is no coincidence that LI Schools are top of the list for Intel and Siemens Science Recognition. We value Education here and we will fight to defend our ability to remain the mecca for bright horizons for our children's future. This I believe is my calling and I am privileged to serve this noble cause.

My eternal gratitude goes to my supporters present for giving so generously of your time today. Thank you to the organizers of the MLK Committee for bestowing this honor on this humble servant of public education.