**15543, Shirley Vaughn**
Good Afternoon Ladies,

Welcome to this meeting of the Illinois Association of Colored Women. I am proud to be affiliated with this prestigious organization that is an extension of the National Association of Colored Women This organization has deep roots going all the way back to 1896 founded by Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin in Boston, Massachusetts. It was formed by the merger of the Colored Women’s League of Washington, led by its president Mrs. Helen Cook, and the National Federation of Afro-American Women whose president was Mrs. Booker T. Washington. The first president was Mrs. Mary Church Terrell.

This organization, the IACW, was founded in 1898. The goals and objectives for the IACW are the same as the NACWC, but each of you do your projects from different parts of the country in your respective communities. When formed they chose the motto, “Lifting as we climb” to demonstrate that their aims were identical with those of all good and aspiring women. This motto meant simply that as they improved their lives they lifted up those around them. No one improved their own life simply for themselves, but used that improvement to help improve the lives of other women like themselves. They have continued that goal over the years.

This year our theme is "Living Our Legacy Through Growth, Harmony, and Enhancing the Lives of Women and Children. In our long history we have built a dynamic sisterhood that seeks to improve the lives of women and children all over the nation. During that time we have created scholarships, built caretaker cottages, compiled male volunteers, organized competitions, all great endeavors to improve the lives of our fellow sisters. We have developed healthcare organizations and mentoring programs and works tirelessly to help those around us.

It is my heartfelt desire that the IACW continue through their network of clubs to address immediate and long range issues that impact their respective communities. The opportunities for women today are much greater than they have ever been in history. It is imperative that we continue to work to keep the forward momentum going that our founders worked so hard to achieve.

This organization is flowing with talent and filled with business acumen. With that combination you can accomplish great things. You can help women of all ages to achieve their best, building a foundation for the next generation to achieve even greater accomplishments.

With all the modern day achievements there are also modern day challenges and I know that each of you is up to the task to meet and overcome those challenges so that our women of today and our young people who will make our tomorrow will continue the proud heritage of helping our fellow women and children to fulfill their call in life whether it is to business, healthcare, government or the arts. Opportunities abound. I challenge you to take advantage of them. Be bold in your endeavors. Be confident in your plans. Be certain that you can accomplish whatever is necessary to reach your common goals.

Thank you Ladies and Good luck in your future.