



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

Press Release

Allison Fore

Public and Intergovernmental Affairs Officer

312.751.6626

allison.fore@mwrdd.org

100 East Erie Street, Chicago, Illinois 60611

For immediate release

March 5, 2019

MWRD celebrates female African American trailblazers



(Front row, L-R): Dorothy Leavell, Publisher, Chicago Crusader and Publisher/Owner, Chicago Reader; Katara Washington Patton, Senior Editor, Chicago Defender; Cook County Clerk Karen Yarbrough and MWRD President Kari K. Steele. (Back row, L-R): MWRD Diversity Administrator Regina Berry, Executive Director Brian Perkovich, Vice President Barbara McGowan, former U.S. Senator and Ambassador Carol Moseley Braun.

The Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) honored the accomplishments of local African American women who have inspired their communities while blazing a trail for future leaders to follow.

In observance of African American History Month, MWRD Vice President Barbara McGowan and the MWRD's Diversity Section brought together a talented group of panelists who gave overviews of progress made in advancing diversity, as well as discussing the challenges and rewards related to their individual achievements. The annual event was held on Feb. 21 at the MWRD's headquarters in downtown Chicago.

"This annual event provides the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago with an opportunity to recognize and applaud the contributions of many resilient African Americans," said Vice President Barbara McGowan. "We are happy to honor this talented panel of African American women whose successful leadership in



(L-R) MWRD Commissioners Marcelino Garcia, Mariyana Spyropoulos and Debra Shore, Lt. Governor Juliana Stratton, U.S. Senator and Ambassador Carol Moseley Braun, MWRD President Kari K. Steele, Commissioner Kimberly Du Buclet and Vice President Barbara McGowan.

government and media have created a blueprint for others to follow."

U.S. Sen. Carol Moseley Braun served as Mistress of Ceremonies for the evening. Panel participants and honorees included Dorothy Leavell, Publisher, Chicago Crusader and Publisher/Owner, Chicago Reader; Katara Washington Patton, Senior Editor, Chicago Defender; Kari K. Steele, President, MWRD; Juliana Stratton, Illinois Lieutenant Governor; and Karen Yarbrough, Cook County Clerk. Byron Steele accepted the award on behalf of his mother, former Commissioner and President of the Cook County Board Bobbi Steele, the first African American woman to serve as president of the Cook County Board and the only African American woman to serve as chairperson of the Finance Committee of the Forest Preserve District of Cook County. Also honored but not in attendance was Illinois Senate Assistant Majority Leader Kimberly Lightford, who in 1998 became the youngest African-American female ever elected to the Illinois Senate in 1998. *(continued)*

MWRD celebrates female African American trailblazers, *cont.*

The distinguished panelists recognized for their many contributions included:

- **Dorothy Leavell** - First African American female publisher and editor of the Chicago Crusader, having published the Chicago Crusader and Gary Crusader for more than 50 years.
- **U.S. Senator, Carol Moseley Braun** - In addition to her pioneering role as U.S. Senator, Carol Moseley Braun served as an Assistant United States Attorney, prosecuting cases on behalf of the United States Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Illinois, also serving as a member of the Illinois House of Representatives, as the Cook County Recorder of Deeds and as Ambassador to New Zealand.
- **Katara Washington Patton** - In addition to her role as senior editor of The Chicago Defender, Patton is an author and publishing consultant. Her company, Esteem Publishing, allows writers to bring their book and media ideas to fruition.
- **Kari K. Steele** - President Kari K. Steele was elected November 6, 2012 to her first term as a Commissioner at the MWRD and re-elected in 2018 for a second term. In January 2019 she was elected President of the Board of Commissioners. She is a chemist, an environmentalist and a community leader. She has more than 11 years of experience working as a chemist. She worked at both the Jardine Water Purification Plant as a water chemist and at the MWRD as a water sampler and lab technician.
- **Lt. Gov. Juliana Stratton** - Elected to serve as Illinois' 48th lieutenant governor and its first African American woman to serve in this capacity. She has owned and op-



Audience members hear opening remarks from Vice President Barbara McGowan.

- erated her own small business, served as an attorney and professional mediator, held a position in higher education as Director of the Center for Public Safety and Justice at the University of Illinois at Chicago and served as a Representative in the Illinois State Legislature.
- **Karen Yarbrough** - First African American woman to serve as Cook County Clerk. Also serving as Cook County Recorder of Deeds, Representative in the Illinois State Legislature and the first female President of the Maywood Chamber of Commerce.

“Each of our guests has broken down barriers and enriched our society with their major contributions to area residents of all backgrounds,” said President Steele. “We welcome them to the MWRD, celebrate their contributions and thank them for making Illinois a better place to live.”

###

Recovering Resources, Transforming Water

Established in 1889, the MWRD (www.mwr.org) is an award winning, special purpose government agency responsible for wastewater treatment and stormwater management in Cook County, Illinois.