



A Message about Mrs. Emma L. Wilson King

East St. Louis is a unique place with an historical legacy where its diversity of neighborhoods, institutions and people has sustained it. There are countless stories of individuals who have come out of our City and as the saying goes, done well.

Famed silent screen artist Lillian Gish worked in a shop along Collinsville Avenue; Blazing Broadway theater director Barbara Ann Teer would spend countless hours honing her craft at Lincoln Senior High; Consummate Illinois legislature Wyvetter H. Younge would mold a life career of caring for her constituents.

And then, there are those mothers whom are not famous for the Arts and Sciences. Those mothers who simply do their role as a parent to ensure their children, and those like their children are afforded a fair opportunity; and, treated with dignity and respect.

The late Mrs. Emma L. Wilson King was an East St. Louis resident whom above all cherished the twelve children whom she would carve out a life for in a community she dearly loved. "East St. Louis" as she would say, "gave me opportunity and the ability to dream".

Her standard way of living may not have been considered lavish in the material worldly sense. It was indeed one where you were taught to do service, honor every individual regardless of their station and maintain your self-esteem.

She like other mothers along Colas Avenue in the Southend would volunteer to ensure a neighbor's house was clean and ready when returning home from hospital with their new born triplets. She would offer up her children's clothes knowing they did not have much.

Mrs. King would organize a simple neighborhood ladies club as a bond of African American mothers would year end and year out have funds they had accumulated to treat their families to as "treasures" during the holidays.

Mrs. King would have a lifelong love of gardening, flowers and speak of those times as a child in the Mississippi fields picking cotton. Despite it all, with her ever present enduring smile, sense of dignity, and instructing others through her examples of parenting she was in effect practicing the art of teaching. These are essential aspects of her life she displayed and she has passed on to her children. This is how the community continues.

The fundamentals of a solid education for her children and giving back to ones community were important aspects of Mrs. King's life. It is for this reason The Emma L Wilson King Foundation was created to carry on those keen aspects characteristic of family life experiences growing up in East St. Louis.