



Resolution Honoring CTPF Member Karen Lewis, Chicago Teachers Union President *Emerita*

WHEREAS, Karen Jennings was born on July 20, 1953, on Chicago's south side into a family of teachers, and attended Chicago Public Schools Kozminski Elementary School and Kenwood High School; and

WHEREAS, she left high school early to attend Mount Holyoke College in Massachusetts, and then transferred to Dartmouth University in New Hampshire, an Ivy League institution which had only recently admitted women, where she earned the distinction of being a trailblazing student and the only African American woman in the class of 1974; and

WHEREAS, she was a brilliant student and talented musician who spoke three languages, she considered a career in medicine, but chose teaching instead after she "fell madly, passionately in love with it," and graduated with a bachelor's degree in sociology and music from Dartmouth in 1974, and went on to receive a master's from Northeastern Illinois University, and an M.F.A. from Columbia College; and

WHEREAS, she returned to Chicago and taught Chemistry at Sullivan High School and later worked for Lane Tech College Prep High School and King College Prep, and at Lane Tech met John Lewis, a fellow teacher, whom she married in 2001; and

WHEREAS, she served as a high school chemistry teacher with distinction for 22 years, earned National Board Certification, and impacted thousands of students, and measured her success by the "hugs earned at the end of each year;" and

WHEREAS, she was active in her community, serving as a member of her local school council, and countless other organizations including the Chicago Teachers Union as a member of the House of Delegates, High School Functional Vice President, and the Illinois State Certification Board; and

WHEREAS, she left the classroom in 2010, as she was elected to lead her colleagues as President of the Chicago Teachers' Union, and served until her retirement in 2018, when she was awarded the title President *Emerita*; and

WHEREAS, where her work strengthened and united the organization and created a model for activism that energized and engaged its members; and

WHEREAS, she spoke truth to power, fought fiercely for public education and social justice, and became a national figure and powerful force in the education and labor sector whose work changed the trajectory of education and the City of Chicago, and set an example for others to follow nationwide; and

WHEREAS, her influence and leadership grew as she served as vice president of the American Federation of Teachers, and as executive vice president to the Illinois Federation of Teachers; and

WHEREAS, her accomplishments were widely recognized and honored by many, as she was awarded a Doctorate of Humane Letters from the National Labor College and from her *alma mater*, Mt. Holyoke College; and

WHEREAS, her trajectory was cut short at far too young an age, but her powerful legacy will live on providing inspiration for the next generation of teachers, laborers, and other leaders to emulate.

THEREFORE, the Public School Teachers' Pension and Retirement Fund of Chicago hereby resolves, as follows:

1. Karen Lewis, President *Emerita* of the Chicago Teachers Union and CTPF Member has served her students, profession, community, and nation with distinction.
2. Karen Lewis, fought tirelessly to foster excellence in the teaching and learning experience, to safeguard public education, advocate for equality, and protect the rights of CTPF students and educators throughout state of Illinois and throughout her life.
3. That the Board of Trustees, on behalf of the CTPF membership, recognize, acknowledge, and appreciate Karen Lewis' legacy and hold that her memory be forever a blessing.



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February 18, 2021

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