

RICHARD J. DURBIN

ILLINOIS

ASSISTANT DEMOCRATIC LEADER

COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

COMMITTEE ON RULES
AND ADMINISTRATION

United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510-1304

May 1, 2016

Dear Friends:

I'd like to extend my warmest wishes to you all as you commemorate Fisk University's 150th anniversary. The Sesquicentennial is a special opportunity to celebrate the rich history of Fisk and look ahead to its bright future.

From its earliest days, Fisk has played a leadership role in the education of African-Americans, producing graduates from diverse backgrounds with the integrity and intellect required for substantive contributions to society.

The strong values of Fisk date back to its founding in 1866. Just five years after Fisk opened, the Fisk Jubilee Singers began touring the country to earn much-needed money for the University. Following one of their first concerts, the Jubilee Singers donated the entire earnings of their performance to the victims of the notorious 1871 Chicago Fire, which took 300 lives, injured hundreds more, and left thousands in Chicago without homes. This selfless act of charity could have ended their tour, but their benevolence was rewarded and the Jubilee Singers continue to flourish to this day.

The generosity that the Jubilee Singers demonstrated back in 1871 exemplifies the mission and spirit of Fisk University today.

Once again, my best wishes to Fisk University on this momentous occasion. Congratulations on all your work and achievements and I wish you the best of luck in all your future endeavors.

Very truly yours,



Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



A Resolution

Sponsored by

**THE HONORABLE ROBERT B. STEELE
PRESIDENT-PRO TEMPORE
COOK COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

HONORING FISK UNIVERSITY 2016 SESQUICENTENNIAL (150TH) ANNIVERSARY

WHEREAS, Fisk University founded in 1866 in Nashville, Tennessee after the Civil War and during Reconstruction is celebrating its sesquicentennial (150th) anniversary; and

WHEARAS, occupying a preeminent position in US arts and culture, following an era of separation and exclusion, the history of this esteemed institution is worth reflecting upon; and

WHEREAS, in 1867 Mr. George White, then Treasurer of Fisk University, began to organize students who were interested in voice performance into small groups that sang a capella. Treasurer White also began to propose that musical performances be used as a method of fundraising to meet the pressing financial needs of the school. His ideas were initially met with opposition from the university and the American Missionary Association. However, as a result of a successful performance in Gallatin, TN, Treasurer White argued that the students presented a refined image and suitable deportment - and that northern audiences had probably never seen a performance of this caliber by African Americans; and

WHEREAS, in the summer of 1871, Mr. White began to prepare the students for tour. By autumn, the students performed to segregated audiences in southern Tennessee and Georgia, raising \$47.95 after their expenses were paid. This was enough to convince Treasurer White, and nine students to extend the tour to the north during the 1871-1872 school year. It was their second performance in Ohio where they made a small profit of \$50.00. That same night, October 8, 1871, an inner-city inferno raged through the City of Chicago, taking three hundred lives and leaving 90,000 without homes, and left to take shelter in refugee camps. In response, the Fisk students donated all their proceeds to the Chicago Fire Relief Drive; and

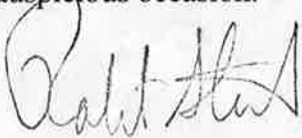
WHEREAS, this selfless act of charity could have ended their tour they went on. Eventually their benevolence was rewarded and the singers were invited to perform before a meeting of the National Council of Congregational Churches in Oberlin, Ohio. The concert was pivotal in two ways: a collection of \$ 130.00 was presented to the singers; and those assembled sent an endorsement of the group to the American Missionary Association; and

WHEREAS, as the northern tour continued, the singers were often refused accommodations in white-owned hotels. In New York they were forced to stay in private homes, yet they persevered and traveled on to the New England area. During a memorable week in Connecticut, the Fisk Jubilee Singers, as they later became known, received \$4,000.00 in contributions. In Washington DC, the singers performed for President Ulysses S. Grant, Vice President Colfax and Tennessee Senator William G. Brownlow; and

WHEREAS, while the first tour concluded with a performance in Poughkeepsie, New York, the singers returned to Nashville on May 2nd, 1872, after only one week's rest. The tour resumed and the Fisk Jubilee Singers traveled to Boston to participate in the second World Peace Jubilee, after which they launched a successful tour to Europe, performing to royals and dignitaries in England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland; and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, I Robert B. Steele, President Pro Tempore and Cook County Commissioner-2nd District, on behalf of the 5.3 million residents of the County of Cook, do hereby congratulate and commend Fisk University in celebrating its sesquicentennial (150) anniversary. Many heartfelt thanks to the Fisk Jubilee Singers, who then and now serve as an ambassadors for not only Fisk University, but also America, by helping to bridge relationships around the globe through education, arts, and culture. We salute this esteemed institution for these contributions, and those of its esteemed alumni who include: W. E. B. DuBois; Ida B. Wells; James Weldon Johnson; Booker T. Washington; John Hope Franklin; Percy Lavon Julian; Hazel O'Leary; Wade McCree; W. C. Handy; Constance Baker Motley; Aaron Douglas; John Lewis; Mary Frances Barry; Nikki Giovanni; Judith Jamison; Johnetta B. Cole; Alma Powell; Matthew Knowles; and Kim Whitley... We hope for the renewed strength of Fisk University in the years to come.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this text is spread upon the official proceedings of this Honorable Body and a suitable copy of same be tendered to the Interim President of Fisk University, Frank L. Sims to celebrate this auspicious occasion.



Hon. Robert B. Steele
President Pro-Tempore
Cook County Board of Commissioners-2nd District

A resolution

adopted by *The City Council*
of the *City of Chicago, Illinois*



Presented by ALDERMAN MICHAEL SCOTT, JR. on APRIL 13, 2016

Congratulations to Fisk University on 150th Anniversary

WHEREAS, Fisk University was founded in 1866 in Nashville, Tennessee by John Ogden, Reverend Erastus Milo Cravath and Reverend Edward P. Smith, supported by the American Missionary Association which later became part of the United Church of Christ, with which Fisk is still affiliated; and

WHEREAS, Fisk University is celebrating its 150th Anniversary; and

WHEREAS, this esteemed body has been informed of this milestone by Michael Scott, Jr., Alderman of the 24th Ward; and

WHEREAS The school was named in honor of General Clinton B. Fisk of the Tennessee Freedmen's Bureau, who provided the new institution with facilities in former Union Army barracks; and

WHEREAS, Fisk University is a Historically Black College and University (HBCU); and

WHEREAS, in 1871, Fisk University's renowned Jubilee Singers were formed. The Singers have performed for such luminaries as Ulysses S. Grant, William Gladstone, Mark Twain, Johann Strauss, and Queen Victoria; and

WHEREAS, Fisk University in 1933 became the first HBCU accredited by the Association of American Universities; and

WHEREAS, Phi Beta Kappa established a chapter in 1953 at Fisk University, the first chapter at a HBCU; and

WHEREAS, in 1978 the Fisk campus was designated a National Historic District in recognition of its architectural, historic, and cultural significance; and

WHEREAS, Fisk's notable alumni include W.E.B. Du Bois, Ida B. Wells and Representative John Lewis; and

WHEREAS, Fisk's prominence in the arts is demonstrated by having as distinguished faculty members artist Aaron Douglas, author Robert Hayden, and composer John Work, Sr. (as well as John Work, Jr. and John Work III) ; and

WHEREAS, Fisk University with approximately 850 students ranked seventh among HBCU in the most recent *U.S. News and World Reports* rankings; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED, That we, the Mayor and members of the City of Chicago City Council, assembled here this thirteenth day of April, 2016, do hereby extend our heartiest congratulations to Fisk University on the their 150th anniversary.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be prepared and presented to Fisk University.

MICHAEL SCOTT, JR.
Alderman, 24TH Ward