



Address by State Representative Polly Thomas
at the 2019 Louisiana Legislative Women's Caucus
Foundation's Women of Excellence Awards & Scholarships
Ceremony and Reception
Tuesday, April 30, 2019
6:30 p.m.

I am honored to be among each of you and especially proud to be asked to offer a few words of inspiration to the scholars who are being honored in with Women of Excellence Awards and Scholarships.

As a former educator, educational administrator, and as an elected official, I have encountered first-hand the advantages and disadvantages of being a woman with an opinion. I have experienced bruised feelings from hearing powerful men demean my credentials, comment more on my style than my substance, address me with a patronizing tone and more. But each time I reminded myself that men who put down women are not powerful at all. Because those who are truly powerful lift others up. Those who are powerful unite others rather than divide. Those who

are powerful treasure others who are demanding equality and earning respect for what they know, not how they look.

Powerful women have changed the world. On August 19th, 1588, England's Queen Elizabeth the First sat atop a white horse and addressed troops at Tilbury. While defending her strength as a female leader, she empowered an army. Queen Elizabeth told the troops, "I know I have the body of a weak and feeble woman; but I have the heart and stomach of a king." Her conviction, her passion, her belief in her ability to lead rallied her troops as they successfully defended the Kingdom against a Spanish invasion. She embodied the pride of her country and her spirit surged throughout England as they grew into a national power.

My message to you is to believe in yourself. Believe with all your heart. Never settle for less than you believe you deserve. Never give less than your all. There will always be those who would rather pull you down than lift themselves up, but don't let them detract you from your mission, your goals.

You are precious. Not because of your youthful, wide-eyed looks, but because of your inspirational outlook on our future. You deserve to be treated with dignity and respect, and if you aren't, don't settle for

anything less. You have something valuable to offer and you have even more to say, so be heard.

Take time to soul search. Decide what you want to be. Decide how you want the world to remember you. Decide what it is that you will do to make the world better because of you. Then with all your soul, make those decisions your blueprint for living.

Always strive to be something greater than fashionable ... pretty ... hot. If you are told you are any of those things, accept the compliment graciously but know in your heart that you strive to be more. Strive to be brilliant. Strive to be bold. Strive to be fearless. Strive to be all that you know that you can be and want to be.

Many of the women before me and many women today are shattering some ... and I emphasize some ... of those glass ceilings that should no longer hold us back. But it is your generation that will stand on the shoulders of great women before you until you achieve your own greatness and have the broad shoulders to carry the weight of generations after you.

I am proud of each of you. I am honored to be among you. I am your sister who is here willing to help you in any way that you believe that I can. And I am among your greatest supporters eager to champion any cause that lifts you and others to equality in every sense of the word.

God bless you all. Thank you.