



Here is the text of Mayor Lori Lightfoot's inaugural address, as prepared for delivery on May 20, 2019.

<https://www.chicagobusiness.com/government/lori-lightfoots-inaugural-address>

Thank you.

Thank you so very much.

I stand here as your mayor, humble and hopeful, honored to be the 56th mayor in the history of this great city.

We are a proud city with a proud history. In this moment, I cannot help but look at all of you and think about what lies ahead and what we can be together. I'm looking ahead to a city of safe streets and strong schools for every child regardless of neighborhood or zip code. A city where people want to grow old and not flee. A city of sanctuary against fear where no one must hide in the shadows.

A city that is affordable for families and seniors and where every job pays a living wage.

A city of fairness and hope and prosperity for the many, not just for the few, a city that holds equity and inclusion as our guiding principles.

Chicago is not where my story began, but from the moment I arrived in Hyde Park to attend law school and begin my career, this city felt like where I belonged. It's where I met the love of my life, my wife, Amy. It's where our daughter, Vivian, was born and where she's growing up into the kind, curious, and spirited young woman I always knew she would be.

For me, this has been a city of opportunity. It's been a city of hope.

As I stand here today, I can't help but think of where I came from—and I know, in my heart, that a story like mine of a kid from a working class family growing up to realize the dreams of my father and mother through education, hard work and sheer determination needs to be the story of possibility in every neighborhood. Kids who look like me and come from families like mine shouldn't have to beat the odds to get an education, pursue their passions, or build a family.

Black and brown kids, low-income kids, every kid in this city should grow up knowing they can pursue anything, they can love anyone—that's my Chicago dream. I know we're just a little bit closer to that dream as I stand here today, inaugurated as Chicago's first Black woman and first openly gay mayor. I know we're a little bit closer as we celebrate that, for the first time in the history of Chicago, women of color now hold all three of our city-wide elected offices.

I congratulate you, City Clerk Anna Valencia and City Treasurer Melissa Conyears-Ervin, on your inaugurations, your victories, and on all you've overcome to reach this historic moment. I also congratulate the aldermen of the Chicago City Council – in particular, the 12 aldermen who are taking their seats for the first time.

I thank Mayor Emanuel for his dedication and service to our city, which was exemplified by the attention and time that he and his staff devoted to making this transition as smooth as possible. I also commend Amy Rule for her contributions to the city. Join me in wishing them both well as they head off into the next chapter of their lives.

I also acknowledge and thank the other leaders here today: Governor JB Pritzker, Lieutenant Governor Juliana Stratton, Senator Dick Durbin, Senator Tammy Duckworth, our Illinois congressional delegation, Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle, representatives from our state legislature, and every other elected official here today. Thank you for your continued service.

Most importantly, thank you to the people of Chicago, who had the courage to put their faith in a newcomer and the optimism to join this moment. We stand today at a time of great hope and possibility. And I can't help but feel the spirit of the great Mayor Harold Washington here with us this morning.

Now there's one person you are about to meet who laid the foundation for everything that I am today. I want to introduce you to a former elected official with us today—a one-time school board member from my hometown of Massillon, Ohio.

She's my role model, my champion. The woman whose dreams and high expectations for me propelled me through life, my mother, Ann Lightfoot. My mom is 90 years old—forgive me for that one, Mom—and doesn't travel much these days. But nothing could keep her or my siblings—Derrick, Angela, Brian, and Stacey—from being here today.

My mother and my late father Elijah gave us the best they could in the segregated Ohio steel town where we grew up, even when they had almost nothing left to give.

As parents, they led by example. They instilled in me a clear set of values: loyalty to family, friends, and community; and the importance of hard work, education, and integrity.

And, Mom, most importantly, you and Dad told me that I could be anything I wanted to be. That I could not be held back by my race, gender, or family financial status. That I should hold my head high and not let anyone else dictate the course of my future. That no goal was out of reach, that no victory was too unlikely to pursue.

I feel Dad's presence with us today.

My gratitude to you both has no limit. Just like when I was a little girl, I'm working hard to make you proud. To honor your sacrifice, to live by the values you instilled in me, to make sure that families like ours don't have to struggle like we did.

I look out today and see a proud city with a proud history. . .

Here in Chicago . . . right here. . .

. . . our people invented the skyscraper and the Ferris Wheel. . .

. . . here . . . our people invented our own Chicago blues. . .

Our people.

Generations of industrious, hardworking people . . . who built one of the greatest cities to ever grace God's earth.

I stand here today as your Mayor . . . humble and hopeful . . . and I make one solemn promise to the generations who came before us and to the generations who come after us:

We will continue to build this great city . . . and leave it better, stronger, fairer, and more prosperous than we found it.

The challenges we face today did not arise overnight. . .

. . . and they will not be solved overnight. . .

. . . and they certainly won't be solved by one Mayor acting alone.

In this important moment, let us remember the powerful words of Chicago's poet laureate Gwendolyn Brooks.

“We are each other's harvest,” she said.

“We are each other's business; we are each other's magnitude and bond.”

Folks, we are and must be in this together.

Our challenges can only be solved if we face them together.

We cannot fail.

We will not fail.

We are Chicago.

I also remember so many people I've met in this city who can't be here today.

The big guy who came to hear me speak and then followed outside on a cold blustery day on the southeast side and pleaded "Lori, just bring us jobs . . . just bring us jobs. We want to work."

The teenagers I met on the south side . . . kicked out of their homes . . . and left on the streets at night in the bitter cold . . . with no food and no shelter . . . just because they are gay or trans.

The father on the west side who told me he was scared . . . scared to death . . . every time his three daughters left the house. Those girls are his whole world and he's worried somebody is going to gun them down.

The countless number of people whose daily fear is that ICE would come for them as they took their kids to school, stood as day laborers, or just walked in their neighborhoods.

We should never forget that these are the people who put us here.

We are each other's business.

And standing up for them is our business . . . our only business.

There are four stars on Chicago's flag, each standing for a point in our history . . . the construction of Fort Dearborn . . . the great expositions of 1893 and 1933 . . . and the reconstruction of our city following the Great Chicago Fire.

Each star stands for building and rebuilding.

Today, we proudly reinterpret these four stars new meaning for a new century, with new challenges and opportunities that lie ahead . . . guiding our city . . . and guiding our new administration . . . as we move forward and rebuild again.

Today, we reimagine the first star standing for safety, in every neighborhood.

People cannot . . . and should not . . . live in neighborhoods that resemble a war zone.

Enough of the shootings. Enough of the guns. Enough of the violence.

Let's unite in our response to the biggest challenge we face: the epidemic of gun violence that devastates families, shatters communities, buries dreams, and holds children hostage to fear in their own homes. It inflicts life-long trauma that spreads through our communities like a virus.

When we hear of a random bullet cutting a life short, people across the city—from all ages and all walks of life—begin to wonder if Chicago is a place where they can continue to live and raise their children. Some have already answered the question by moving away, particularly from the hardest hit communities. The mass exodus we have seen, particularly in the Black community, saps the vitality of our great city. We must reverse the exodus by creating the reality of safety in every neighborhood. Public safety must not be a commodity that is only available to the wealthy.

What this means for me is that there is no higher calling than restoring safety and peace in our neighborhoods. We will develop a new, proactive strategy in partnership with the communities hit hardest by the scourge of gun violence. All of our stakeholders must be committed to this work. This is not a challenge that can be solved by law enforcement alone, nor will we ever place the blame on people in communities who are under siege. No, this greatest challenge demands all of us, united together. And I promise you, the city will lead and we've already begun this work.

To lead the citywide response, we are creating a Mayor's Office of Public Safety, to be led by a Deputy Mayor. That office will be charged with developing and implementing a comprehensive violence-prevention strategy that will connect efforts across city government, other aspects of the public sector, and nonprofit, philanthropic, education, recreation, business and faith communities. It will seek to mobilize the entire city behind a unified strategy to prevent violence and promote public safety.

And while we will specifically address gun violence, we will not limit our efforts there. The devastation of violence is far and wide which is why we will also reach out and support the growing community of victims and witnesses. We must recognize the importance of providing a transition for our returning citizens. And we will accelerate the development of a trauma-informed city starting with repairing our broken mental health safety net.

We will also continue the hard, but essential work of forging partnerships between police officers and the community premised on mutual respect, accountability, and a recognition that the destinies of police and community are inextricably intertwined. One simply cannot succeed without the other.

And to all of our brave first responders, we will not leave you behind either. You deserve not only our respect but our commitment to train you better, provide the best quality supervision available, and wellness support to address the trauma that you face every day.

These are critical pieces of police reform and accountability.

We are each other's business.

We are each other's neighbors.

And . . . together . . . we will work tirelessly to bring peace to this city

Our second guiding star is education.

We cannot attract families to Chicago . . . and keep families here . . . without providing a quality public education . . . for every child . . . and that means every single child.

As a city, we make promises to our children, as well. Most of all, we promise them an education—a safe, relevant, and challenging education that prepares them for meaningful work, civic engagement and life-long learning.

But whether we deliver on that promise often depends on where you happen to live. It's time to give every child and young person a good education, to prove through our schools that we believe in them, that we support them—no matter who they are or where they live. That every child gets a quality education—that's our business, no matter what.

Someone said to me recently that children are a product of the adult ecosystem around them. And she was 100 percent right. Our words, our values, how we meet our commitments and rise to the occasion—it all matters. We're shaping the future leaders of our city, and when we put equity first in our education system, when we make good on a promise that every kid matters, it will instill within our children the values we seek to foster in our city as a whole.

That promise must begin early—that's why we will work to expand early childhood education, and extend the promise of a good education through high school and college, and to every kid, no matter their path forward. Every student should have the option to pursue vocational and technical training. We will work with businesses and unions to set up apprenticeships for those who want to learn a trade. We will then connect Chicago's employers with our job-ready students while they're in school, so they can get to work the day they graduate.

And we will support our great teachers, counselors, librarians, nurses and other support personnel who are essential to creating the safe and nurturing environment necessary for our children to grow, learn and thrive.

Let me also say that I'm thrilled to see so many young people in the audience—my next few words are for you and all of your peers across the city: you have the most at stake in the city's future, just as the city's future most depends on you.

We need your energy, creativity, intelligence, and dedication. There's hard work ahead of us. But we will do that work, because we believe you and in the vast, still-untapped potential of this great city.

Our goal is simple: starting in our schools, we will create a citywide workforce as the pipeline for jobs of today and tomorrow that will be the envy of the world.

We are each other's business.

And we must meet our educational challenges . . . together.

The third of our guiding stars is stability.

To be true to the notion of stability, we must start with getting our fiscal house in order.

Over many, many years Chicago dug itself into a giant financial hole.

We have an outsize structural deficit, a persistent and growing pension debt, and other costs that threaten our financial stability. We are spending a significant percentage of every dollar just to service our pension debt alone and too much of that money is being sent to banks and Wall Street bond firms instead of going to our rebuild our neighborhoods, reduce our property taxes and revitalize our transportation system.

We must tackle this problem head on.

My team has already been the necessary work of measuring the size and depth of our fiscal challenges, as well as working on a range of possible solutions. Once that analysis is complete, we will lay out a plan to put Chicago on the path to solvency.

No doubt some hard choices will have to be made and none of this is going to be easy. But we will do the hard work with transparency, integrity and a determination to put our pensions on a true path to solvency, and make our government work more efficiently, and without balancing budgets on the backs of low wage and working-class Chicagoans. And we will get there . . . because we must.

Stability also means that we must build housing that is affordable for more people, including families. Long term residents—whether homeowners or renters—should not be forced out of their neighborhoods when it goes through a period of transformation.

And developers can no longer skip their responsibilities by taking tax dollars but leaving it to someone else to solve our affordable housing crisis.

Here too, the City must lead. We need to cut the red tape and obstacles and instead promote the building of new units and have flexibility in our building code so that innovative housing forms can come on line.

We must also have a plan for expanding home ownership and converting vacant lots and abandoned buildings into new vibrant communities. Growth of housing that is affordable, all over this city, will be the charge of the new housing department under new leadership.

Stability also means support for our business community . . . large and small.

Strong businesses . . . growing businesses . . . new businesses . . . mean jobs for people . . . and stability for the city.

We need fairness . . . which means paying as much attention to our neighborhood businesses as we do to the businesses downtown.

Our neighborhoods have been neglected for too long. They cannot be anymore.

Still, we should never settle for dividing up a shrinking pie or pitting one part of this city against another.

Chicago is the economic engine of Illinois and the whole Midwest.

As with everything, we are each other's business.

We need to grow . . . and grow . . . and grow . . . together.

Our fourth star must be integrity.

I know, I know . . . putting Chicago government and integrity in the same sentence is . . . well . . . a little strange.

But that's going to change.

It's got to change.

For years, they've said Chicago ain't ready for reform.

Well, get ready . . . because reform is here.

I campaigned on change, you voted for change, and I plan to deliver change to our government.

That means restoring trust in our city's government and finally bringing some real integrity to the way this city works.

It means making sure we have a government that actually works for people, not a powerful few.

It's about the real harm done to our families and businesses when those with power and money cash in at our expense.

When public officials cut shady backroom deals, they get rich . . . and the rest of us get the bill.

When some people get their property taxes cut in exchange for campaign cash, they get the money . . . and . . . sure enough . . . we get the bill.

The family with the bungalow . . . the lady who runs the hair salon . . . the guy who owns the store on the corner . . . they aren't big or powerful or well-connected . . . but they end up paying.

These practices have gone on here for decades. This practice breeds corruption.

Stopping it isn't just in the city's interest.

It's in the City Council's own interest.

No official in the City of Chicago . . . elected or appointed . . . should ever profit from his or her office.

Never. Ever.

This requirement that people must give more to get access to basic city services must end.

And it will end, starting today.

Later this afternoon, I will sign an executive order to end the worst abuses of so-called Aldermanic privilege.

This does not mean our Aldermen won't have power in their communities. It does not mean our Aldermen won't be able to make sure the streetlights are working . . . or the parking signs are in the right place . . . or any of the thousands of good things they do for people every day.

It simply means ending their unilateral, unchecked control over on every single thing that goes on their wards. Alderman will have a voice, not a veto.

It's time for a new era of trust between the people of Chicago and the government that serves them.

When our poet said we are each other's bond that's what she meant.

And there's something else we must do, for ourselves and our posterity.

We will establish a new Social Compact here in Chicago based on a simple principle shared by every major religion in the world.

It goes by many names.

In Buddhism it says, "hurt not others in ways that you yourself would find hurtful."

In the Quran, it says, "whoever saves a life, it is as though he had saved all mankind."

It is in the Torah.. and again in the New Testament, it is called the Great Commandment: "love thy neighbor as thyself."

Today, too many of our people lack decent housing and far too many end up on our streets.

Today, too many of our people feel isolated and alone. And as our senior population increases, we must meet the needs of those without family or friends for support.

Today . . . as we prepare to enter the third decade of the twenty first century . . . one out of every five children in Chicago still lives in poverty.

Addressing the problems of housing . . . isolation . . . and poverty in our great city is just as important as anything else we may do . . . and far harder to solve.

But tackle these problems we must.

I heard a century-old hymn in church the other day. A song that I know from my youth of so many Sundays sitting in church, listening to the working class people in my congregation, who toiled in factories, kitchens, or outside and came to the church for a respite from their otherwise hard days.

We sang this song:

Pass me not, O gentle Savior,

Hear my humble cry;

While on others Thou art calling,

Do not pass me by.

In that moment, it was our plea to God to shine his light on us and relieve us from our heavy labors. As I reflect on this day and what lies ahead, it means that we must not forget or ignore the plight of so many for whom joy often does not come in the morning. Whether it is the homeless, people living with mental illness, those desperate for love and recognition, we will not pass them by. As we pursue our new stars, this will be our guiding light.

To those who are alone, we are with you.

To those who need a home, we will shelter you.

For those who have little, we will do much.

We see you.

We hear you.

We are your neighbors.

And . . . so help me . . . we will not pass you by.

I stand before you representing tens of thousands of people from all over the city who daily contribute their time, talent, and resources in the cause of making a difference not just to day but if we are bold, our collective efforts will resonate for years to come. Our people, friends and neighbors, known and unknown, at the block level, in our places of worship, in our community organizations and just individuals who want to make a difference have stepped up and contributed mightily to what is the greatness of the city.

I will have the privilege of leading but clearly a single leader cannot heal all the ails us. A single leader cannot by herself conquer all of the challenges that would be present on day one. We all have to be part of that solution. We all must make the sacrifices necessary to identify problems and forge solutions. And, my friends, we must not merely depend on the politicians, the preachers, the police, the teachers, the activists and others to show us the way. We can no longer continue to cede control of our destiny to someone else.

Each of us needs to ask what can I do? What contributions can I make? You may not be the richest, the smartest or even the most able, but ask yourself are you ready to serve in some way because our city surely needs you.

What has been the most amazing and humbling part of the experience in a journey that I have traveled particularly over these last few months is the tremendous hope and optimism that I am feeling from people all over the city. My friends, it is that message of hope, and possibility that should get all of us up in the morning start us on our way and bring all of us together with the excitement and promise born of harnessing our collective energies to move forward together.

Our challenges are great.

There's no mistaking that.

But if we follow these four stars . . . safety . . . schooling . . . stability . . . and integrity . . . we can once again become a city that families want to move to . . . not run away from.

No matter who you are, no matter where you live, no matter your circumstance in life, Chicago is now on a mission to include you, to join hands with you, to share power with you, and to give you reason to believe that we can all pull in the same direction to make Chicago, better, together.

And if we follow the Great Commandment . . . together . . . as neighbors . . . our great city will shine.

God bless you.

And God bless Chicago.

Paul Robeson

That Time, We All Heard It.

That time
cool and clear,
cutting across the hot grit of the day.
The major Voice.
The adult Voice
forgoing Rolling River,
forgoing tearful tale of bale and barge
and other symptoms of an old despond.
Warning, in music-words
devout and large,
that we are each other's
harvest:
we are each other's
business:

we are each other's
magnitude and bond.

—Gwendolyn Brooks

<http://patrickmurfin.blogspot.com/2013/04/national-poetry-monthgwendolyn-brooks.html>

<https://poets.org/text/introduction-gwendolyn-brooks>



Gwendolyn Brooks in the first blush of fame.



Paul Robeson was the epitome of the 20th-century Renaissance man. He was an exceptional athlete, actor, singer, cultural scholar, author, and political activist. His talents made him a revered man of his time, yet his radical political beliefs all but erased him from popular history. Today, more than one hundred years after his birth, Robeson is just beginning to receive the credit he is due. From

<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/americanmasters/paul-robesson-about-the-actor/66>