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# Newark 2016 State Of City Address: Read It Here

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**Newark, NJ** – Newark Mayor Ras Baraka gave the official 2016 state of the city address on Tuesday.

In case you missed it, the full text of Baraka's prepared speech follows:

"Madame President, Honorable Municipal Council, distinguished guests both elected and appointed, city employees and the great people of the greatest city in the State, thank you for your presence here tonight in this great hall. We are here this evening some 350 years after the founding of our great city. 39 Mayors before me have stood where I am now. I am humbled to be in such incredible company. All of them stood face to face with the many problems and obstacles of their day. Some of it germane to their time but other problems unfortunately have survived generations.

"Tonight I want to speak about the problems we face presently, and our attempt to overcome them - some victoriously and others we are still struggling with. I am of no illusion that we can solve our problems alone. It is imperative that we understand that our individual fate is tied up in to the destination of our city. We cannot afford to be spectators, or on the sidelines of our own destiny. It is equally if not more important to understand that our success is inextricably bound to our collective efforts and not our individual ambitions. It is our desire to see our neighbors do well that gives us the capacity to do well ourselves. It is our concern about the well-being of all of us that gives us the insight to solve our most complex issues.

"Theodore Roosevelt said "It is not the critic that counts, not the man who points out how the strong man stumbled or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood, who strives valiantly who errs and comes up short again and again - who knows great enthusiasms, who spends himself in a worthy cause who at best knows in the end that triumph of high achievement and who at the worst if he fails at least fails while daring greatly."

"Put another way, Aime Cesaire wrote "Beware above all crossing of arms and assuming the sterile attitude of the spectator, for life is not a spectacle. A sea of griefs is not a proscenium, and a man who wails is not a dancing bear!"

"A few weeks ago I was blessed to visit the country of Ghana hosted by the Mayor of Accra. I visited three cities and talked to three different Mayors, and two regional ministers. I visited at least eight schools, a University, a hospital, a waste removal plant, and the gravesites of W.E.B. DuBois and the great Kwame Nkrumah. I visited the slave dungeons of Cape Coast and contemplated the long and inhumane journey that made it possible for me to be on this stage here tonight. I spoke at schools with 2,400 young girls in halls that had no walls and dirt floors, classrooms with 50 children in them - some with ages ranges from 14 to 18 studying multiple levels of mathematics and science simultaneously. I saw kindergarten classes with one book in it for the entire class, a hospital performing miracles with little to no resources. I saw a country trying to provide clean water and build a system for millions of people, that struggled to remove sewage and clean their rivers and lakes and dispose of their garbage. I saw a proud and ancient people that worked to solve real problems that they were forced to deal with every day. And I thought maybe if we just for one second faced our problems and struggled with them collectively. If we did what I saw those Ghanaians do. We would be so much further ahead, especially since we are surrounded by an embarrassment of resources.

"There was a time when this country put a man on the moon, found cures for diseases that ravaged our communities, advanced technology that we all benefit from today - jet planes to the internet. We birthed some of the greatest artists and fought against laws and practices that harmed us. We abolished slavery, and crushed Jim Crow too. We outlawed child labor, created an eight-hour day. We increased wages, and organized unions; we made school public and available to everyone. But it seems that our march for democracy has ended. And I don't know if ended with the death of Dr. Martin Luther King, the destruction of the panther party and the anti-war movement or if we have become less interested in the hope of humanity. I just know it has stopped and we have become less concerned about what's right or just and more concerned about reality TV. We are less concerned about real problems and more about how much power we can attain individually, less about solving our problems collectively, and more about embarrassing each other on social media. We have found ourselves in a place where big money has flooded into the republic. Where people are beaten and threatened to be killed at campaign rallies - where politicians are representative of fewer and fewer people or the most retrograde lines and the vilest and most shocking rhetoric.

"It has seeped into local politics as well. Here in our State and even our city - lines are drawn based on who has the most money to give not the best ideas or the most correct position. We are a long way from the Lincoln- Douglas debates or Nixon and John F. Kennedy. A long way from Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Four Freedoms speech, even from Obama and "Yes We Can." Instead we are being force fed a caricature of our worst fears; elections that have turned into vaudeville where

name-calling and one-liners are more important than poverty and dying children. Where things like making sure we all have health care, a living wage, or a nation that is not a police state where millions of people are incarcerated, or a place where we expand higher learning to all Americans became something unreachable. I know some of you are saying "what does this have to do with Newark" and I must inform you that this country's problems are Newark's problems, from poor infrastructure to wage inequality- from poverty to poor access to health; the Foreclosure crisis to access to quality food, housing, and safe neighborhoods.

"A few days ago I had the pleasure of visiting two incredible schools - Marion P. Thomas Charter School and Bard Early College High School. One is a charter school and the other a member of Newark Public Schools. I met a young lady at Marion P. Thomas who talked to me about her journey from Liberia and her fear of graduating from high school. She explained that she has no place to go after high school. She is working hard in school only to be ineligible for student loans and financial aid. I didn't tell her I was building a wall to keep her out. I told her about Essex County College and the many opportunities we have there for her that could lead her in to any school, particularly Rutgers and NJIT. At Bard, I was escorted around by two incredibly bright young ladies - Star and Diamond. They talked to me about the great achievements they are making at their school and the strategies they are taught to help them succeed. She said that most people don't know about Bard School. All they know is about the water issue they have. I told her that I would try to fix that.

"Bard High School did the second best in the city on the PARCC exams. But what you should also know is that more students actually took the test at Bard than at the school that scored a better percentage. So Bard did the best out of schools with a comparable size. Now there are great and brilliant children at Alexander Street School at the North Star Campus, and those students did incredibly well. This is the school the Governor visited, but Bard did equally as well. Why didn't you know this? Because our kids' actual success has been overshadowed by journalists trying to drive traffic to their sites, who have never visited any of these schools, elected officials that have chosen sides based on political expediency or money that cloud the issues with bravado, and special interests that are trying to benefit off of the missteps of our children. This is our city and these are our babies.

"What the Governor doesn't know is that while he was gone, we were working in this city trying to live up to the promise of equal education for all of our children. We don't all agree, and don't end up on the same side of the coin, but we understand that we must struggle until we can find unity; that our children depend on it and our city demands it. We have been meeting to discuss our issues, trying to develop community schools, trying to find common ground in an area overrun with land mines. A leader would try to bring us together, not further separate us. A leader would recognize that we should never advance some children at the expense of others. We have a crisis here of resources that threatens democratic access to a thorough and efficient education to some of our children while highlighting others. It is unethical to recognize the victories of some students while muting the progress of others.

"There are success stories all around us. Newark had more children in beating the odds schools than many cities around the nation. Our kids are succeeding amidst enormous obstacles. Team's graduation rate is 74% and Science High is around 96% Marion P. Thomas is at 88% and Central High School at 71% Bard is at 86% and Technology at 91%. Our students are succeeding at a variety of different schools both district and charter. Our job is to figure out how we make this work for all of our families and not feed those that wish to watch us at each other's throats. Or those that replace democracy for their ego; who threaten people that disagree with them and would violate the law to push their agenda, or worst steal the screams from hungry babies rather than feed them. The British lost the war! There is no king! We live in a democracy, despite what Trump thinks and those that support him. There will be no rolling over people here because if you try to roll me over you would have to roll over thousands of Newarkers that stand with me, and thousands more across this State that are tired of quieting away in the face of tyranny. Thousands, even millions of us, that are Democrats on purpose - and I would submit to you that they would both be traditional and charter parents. And just in case you have forgotten sir - this is Newark, not Fort Lee. You can't just stop traffic here without repercussions.

"It was a pleasure talking to Star and Diamond at Bard School. We talked about the water issue and lead in our city. They were upbeat, and said it has caused them to drink more bottled water than they ever did before. They were more interested in how to solve these problems than scaring each other about them. And as I thought of them I thought of how much we have neglected our infrastructure on a national level, and how we have disinvested in our cities on a local level, and our children are paying the price. We have to do something.

"First I want to thank WBLS, Coca Cola, Neil Greenstein of ShopRite, EC Freeholders, Community Foodbank of NJ, Beth Israel, and many of you for the help you have given our children by supplying bottled water. But that is not a fix to our problems. We have a serious problem in our country and in this state in particular 14 years ago lead was found in the Camden school system and the schools are still using bottled water to this day! Now Newark is faced with the same problem. We have allowed austerity, small government, regressive tax reforms, failure to invest in our infrastructure, mainly our cities where black and brown children are the majority to be put in harm's way. Our students' health is in jeopardy. There is nothing wrong with Newark's water, but there is something wrong with our infrastructure. It is old. Just as most American cities and we need to do something

now. We need strong legislators and groups around our State to demand that even if we are going risk our own lives for politics, we shouldn't risk our children's lives. We don't want to send our children bottled water for the next 20 years and we don't just want filters on water use sights.

"We need our state legislature to support Assembly Bill 2281 sponsored by Assemblywoman Valerie Huttie out of Bergen County that puts a 10-cent deposit on all plastic bottles that allows consumers turn the bottle in to get their 10 cents back or allows the monies to be collected for statewide water infrastructure. Or we need to put a 5-cent tax on all plastic bottles that are sold in our State and 5 cents on all plastic bags. This exists in more than a dozen States across the country. All the monies collected will be dedicated to fixing our water infrastructure throughout the State. A tax on plastic bottles helps us address an environmental issue as well as create a fund for our water infrastructure. I know it's a sacrifice but our children deserve this sacrifice!

"Last year, I stood in City Hall and outlined a vision for where we must go. Since that time I have been honored by the Root magazine in its national top 100, Ebony Magazine as one of many influential African-Americans in the country, the Nation Magazine as one the most progressive Mayors, and on the front of The New York Times as defying expectations. I accept these honors on behalf of all of the incredible people of this city that work tirelessly every day to make our city a place we can all believe in. Last year we said that we would hire more children in the summer. With the help of the philanthropic and corporate community we went from 1,000 children working to 2,900 children, and this summer we are pushing for 3,500 young people working, and I proud to say that some of those young people stayed on past the summer and are working permanent jobs.

"We spoke about bringing many of our residents out of the shadows and creating a municipal ID. We have currently given out over 6,000 municipal IDs and have generated over \$100,000. We talked about our expansive fiber optic capabilities and since then we have generated the fastest free outdoor internet service possibly in the US. Residents can now connect their devices up and down Broad Street, Military Park, Washington Park, and every Recreation Center and Center of Hope in our city. We have developed three free coding classes for young people a week, and trained 12 Newarkers to get jobs through a free program with the help of the WIB, NJIT, and the White house. We talked about advancing our city systems, so now all 18 code enforcers and five fire inspectors are doing digital inspections. Residents can now pay both their water bill and tax bill online. We have also begun to pilot new businesses coming in to our city via an electronic process. This is Newark 3.0! We also all witnessed the creation of a 50 million dollar venture capital fund thanks to the leadership and vision of Don Kats of Audible.Com that will attract new and innovative tech companies to our city.

"Last year we talked about walking in the door with a \$90 million hole and the need to find revenues. In 2015 we set an all-time record for the collection of revenue. We implemented an electronic accelerated tax sale which allowed people to bid on properties online. This generated \$1 million more in revenue and increased our tax collection to 97%. We have collected 7 million more dollars in payroll tax and \$2 million more in parking tax and have begun to work with the State to go after more monies left on the table around special taxes. Let me put it another way - when we came into office the city coffers were completely empty. We had an accumulated operating deficit of \$50 million and unpaid bills totaling some \$20 million. I'm happy to report that in our first full year in office all of the city's major bills have been paid, and we have finished the year \$30 million in the black. We not only made significant progress with city's operating budget, but we also completed the year with a surplus in our water and sewer department of \$14 million and \$6 million respectively. This will help us start on much needed capital improvement projects.

"We talked about developing our downtown in to a 24-hour community. Since then Prudential has opened its new tower. We welcomed a Nike store, Starbucks, Blaze Pizza, and many other retail spaces up and down Broad Street, Market Street, and Halsey Street as well. We broke ground for the Hahne's Building development, which includes a Whole Foods, a new Tryp/Wyndham hotel, and in the last 12 months we have begun construction of close to 1,000 units of residential space in our downtown neighborhood alone. With the residents' help we have secured the funding to complete the riverfront park, and after almost 10 years of no movement we finally closed the deal on Triangle Park. This will be a 22-acre park with a three-acre walking bridge similar to Manhattan's High Line, connecting the downtown community to the Ironbound and Penn Station. This will trigger development all around the area, of commercial, residential, retail, parking, hotels, and more. We have moved the ball down the field and into the end zone. One game closer to the 24-hour downtown community we are trying to build.

"But we have not left our neighborhoods out. We have been going serious on the ground work, stepping up enforcement on stores that are taking advantage of our community, and moving residents out of troubled buildings in to new housing and rehabilitated properties that have been neglected for decades. We were just successful with the help of HUD and the DCA to provide 60 vouchers for families from Stratford Avenue, and are in the process of selling the building to new developers. Across the street we are taking an old structure that was abandoned at least two administrations ago and broke ground to turn it in to the city's first women's health clinic. We have also, with the help of the Municipal Council, are at the final stages of designating parts of the South and West Ward as areas in need of redevelopment. This will allow us to create a redevelopment plan for the area and appoint a master redeveloper. In the West Ward study we included the

mortgages that are underwater and have developed a plan that will allow us to begin looking to seize underwater mortgages from banks that are adding to the blight in our neighborhoods. On Clinton and Chadwick Avenues we cut the ribbon of Phase 2 of new beautiful townhomes in a neighborhood that needed them desperately. Across the street a little we broke ground for artist housing in 505 Clinton Avenue a building that has been abandoned since I was in elementary school. On streets like Broadway, and Abington, Sylvan, and Summer Avenues, we are adding beautiful mixed residential housing. The old St James' Hospital that was closed for years has now been reopened as a Federally Qualified Health Center with the help of our Federal and State delegation, our Municipal Council, and the Fields family. The PSEG Fairmount switching station has begun after much community input and struggle. There will be a towering interactive artist wall headed by internationally famed artist David Ajaye who was the architect of the Smithsonian African-American Museum and at least 14 local artists. Also we are building a state of the art community center, and providing support for local projects and redevelopment.

"But real estate is not enough. We are developing small business incubators throughout the city made up of 100% Newark residents. We have already opened one up on Clinton Avenue where we put residents through a small business training course then gave them a grant to get their businesses off the ground. Last week we just graduated a class from the West Ward and will be moving on to Central, North and East Wards. I also had the pleasure to speak to at least 20 young men and women mostly ex-offenders at the beginning of a training class for a laundry cooperative for reentry with the help of St Barnabas. We want to thank St. Barnabas for committing capital dollars to this program but also committing to support this business by ensuring the laundry will be sustainable by committing some of your procurement dollars. This is a great program taken from Cleveland and Evergreen Industries put together here by Community Economic Development Corporation, the City of Newark, and of course partnering with St. Barnabas. We are also glad to report that Bethel Industries, a textile manufacturer, will be moving to Newark and bringing 400 jobs, also Fabuwood, a furniture assembler, will bring an additional 400 jobs, and a Company known as Hello Fresh that operates in seven different countries will be developing a flagship distribution center here in our city, bringing with them 300 more jobs.

"We also promised last year that we would open Centers of Hope in every ward. I am glad to announce that that has happened, and with the help of the Victoria Foundation we have been able to engage 10,000 more residents this summer than we did the last summer. In the Centers of Hope we partner with agencies like Audible.Com, YMCA, Greater Newark Conservancy, Housing Authority, Newark Girl LIVE LOVE LAUGH, Yendor, Grassroots Production, NCLC, NJPAC and many more. We offer robotics, coding, karate, music, theater, after school help, STEM, yoga, recording studio, and more. Our Centers of Hope are just that, a guaranteed place in the midst of doubt, cynicism, and negativity, that you can find hope and humanity. I was blessed to speak before 16 graduates at the Hire Newark Employment ready boot camp. This is a Center of Hope in partnership with St. Barnabas and Vincent Brown Consulting, a minority firm that trains people in the Health Care fields and other industries as well. They trained 16 Newark residents for five weeks in both hard and soft skills - and all 16 participants were offered jobs. Along with that we have held at least 38 mini-camps, more than 100 summer fun events, and at least 20 back to school events serving over 23,000 residents. We refurbished Boylan Street Recreation Center by adding a new boxing gym and basketball courts. We have torn down the old and dangerous dugouts at Hank Aaron Field in the Central Ward and replaced them new and modern dugouts, and with the help of the Newark Housing Authority we will redo the basketball courts as well. We have also begun to redo St. Peter's Recreation Center in the South Ward. And with the help of the County Executive we have already or are slated to be getting a face lift to Ivy Hill Park, Vailsburg Park, and Weequahic Park.

"We also talked about how we wanted to establish a better relationship with Port Authority. Of course that didn't happen, but we have drafted an executive order and are in the process of creating our Port oversight committee. As we speak, McGladrey Group is conducting an audit of the Port Authority. We have gotten overwhelming amount of interest in the purchase of parts or the entire seaport. We have also sent a letter to the federal Departments of Labor and Justice outlining the unfair hiring practices at the seaport and the fact that there are segregated unions and the workforce only slightly resembles Newark residents.

"And finally we talked a lot about our school system. Last year we had a superintendent that refused to come to public meetings or even entertain community input. We are not in a perfect place now but we have a new superintendent. A very contentious and raucous environment was turned into a plan after 20 years to clearly define a path toward the local control of our schools. We were able to secure \$27 million from the Governor with the help of traditional and charter advocates that will offset the expansion of charters. Without that money we would have taken more resources from traditional classes in our district. We worked with Superintendent Cerf and the Foundation for Newark's Future to get \$10 million for community schools in the South Ward, and \$2 million more for young people that are not in school at all. On top of that we were also able to get another \$1 million targeted toward young people ages 16 to 24 that are not in school and that don't have employment. They will be put in what we are calling street academies. Up to 60 young people will be put in class in the morning and internships and community service in the evening with intent to reconnect them to school and employment. We are marching forward despite the obstacles and we won't stop until we get local control, until democracy rests in the palms of our hands. Though we are constantly forced to shoulder the blame for the performance of this district it has not been under our control for 20 years. And now not only do

we have to worry about our children's intellectual plight, we have to worry about their health as well. Give us our schools back now!

"I cannot leave this evening without talking about crime and violence. When I took office there were 115 murders and we were up in almost every category, and we had a looming consent decree over our heads. With the help of the State Police, the County, and the Feds we were able to reduce shootings and homicides significantly, cut carjacking in half, and began to witness a downward spiral in all crime. In about March 2015 that ended abruptly. We had a rash of shootings that we are still recovering from. Homicides increased, shootings increased, carjacking began to move up again. The same paper that once wrote "Newark Mayor Shows Early Crime Fighting Skills," began to say "Newark is out of control." We began to lose personnel and had no real strategy of how we could compensate. We began moving in the wrong direction.

"As a result we combined our agencies. We brought on a Public Safety Director. We continued to hire more police - almost 100 last year and are planning 150 this year. With the help of Rutgers University-Newark, we organized the Safer Newark Council that gave us critical information. We found out that 80 percent of our blocks did not experience a violent crime in a year, and that most of our shootings and robberies were clustered in particular areas. In fact we found out that most of our homicides in 2015 (that is over 80 out of the 105) took place in the South and West Wards. Our robberies were also clustered in similar patterns and that they were committed by mostly 16-24 year olds. In most cases these seemed to be entry level to harsher more violent crimes, or victims of them. We began to put more officers in the shooting task force and began to see an immediate rise in the closing out of shooting cases which may have resulted in homicides. We have slated that the next two classes that graduate - one last week - will begin walking patrols especially in the areas where violence is the most prevalent.

"We have also begun to do something unprecedented to address the 16 - 24 year olds that are beginning a life of crime by committing robberies - for every 25 police officers hired we have made a commitment to hire a trained social worker out of the police budget to help be a part of a robbery task force that will begin to intervene in the lives of these young people when they are arrested. We want to provide them with the supports they need -both emotional and physical, to change their life around. And I know the media is waiting in the wings to have one of these kids fail, but even if we save one it will be enough for me to continue. We committed ourselves to create a better relationship with the community. The first Community COMSTAT will be in two weeks at Central High School. We are going to train residents in civilian academies. We put a lawyer as head of the internal affairs division, and tomorrow at the Municipal Council meeting they will vote for the strongest, most comprehensive, CCRB in the nation. We are also aware that we cannot reduce crime just by arresting people or doing illegal stop-and-frisks, or shooting people in the back at traffic stops, or choking people to death for selling loose cigarettes, or breaking arms of young people that fit the description. That is why we have secured \$1 million in grant funding for West Ward Victims outreach and crime reduction plan. This targets victims of violence in high crime areas 18-30 years old. It will allow us to provide services, training, and counseling to survivors of violence who may become perpetrators of violence or a homicide victim themselves. We organized the Newark Community Street Team that provides safe passage way to school and conflict resolution particularly since many of our homicides are the result of unresolved conflicts.

"We know that these issues in our community are public health matters. That's why we also engaged with the President in his My Brother's Keeper Challenge and began organizing and focusing on young men of color in our city. I toured every high school and jail talking to, inspiring, and recruiting young men with the help of community activists and our clergy. We are grateful to Prudential for granting us \$775,000 over two years to build infrastructure, capacity, and support around our MBK initiative that will save hundreds of lives and steer many more in to a pipeline of success. And I know the media likes to perpetuate a narrative of our city that is blanketed in despair and hopelessness - unending violence and barbarism at every turn. This is not the city I know. They like to chase violence but they don't chase poverty or five decades of unemployment or poverty wages. They don't chase poor housing and terrible health outcomes or even the children that grow up in households that are food-insecure. There was no Marshall plan for us, and we have been recovering from a war that has never ended. There was no New Deal for us, or even an "Old Deal." In fact our city has been suffering from disinvestment for decades and has never gotten any real assistance after the recession, the foreclosure crisis, and banks that are still taking advantage of our residents.

"Out the 40 or more anchor institutions in our city Newarkers only occupy about 18 percent of the jobs. That means 80 percent of the people that work here from 9 to 5 leave with the wealth this city creates, leaving us to reckon with deep and unyielding underemployment and poverty. Our community has not recovered. These same institutions only procure about three percent of goods and services from our city. We have to do better. We cannot talk about crime and underdevelopment in Newark without talking about the conditions that feed it. We have 50,000 college students in our city and the number of Newarkers that attend them is woefully insufficient. Our city has been this way not simply because the bad behavior of a few. It has been a systemic cycle of benign and deliberate neglect way before I took the oath of office. So what do we do? We are elated that the Newark's college and university community has come together with the City and some 15 other partners across our community to create NCLC. The goal is to increase the number of residents with degrees from 17% to 25% by 2025. Can all of the university presidents stand? They have more than 30 college access programs

with over 2,000 Newark students happening now. We have to work hard to constantly increase that number. And soon you will see billboards and social media campaigns a city wide directory and website resources that will enable more parents to help their children navigate the many pre college and financial assistance programs that NCLC has to offer. We would like to thank Prudential for the ICIC report and for convening the Small Business Summit with us, and pushing the idea of increased procurement, and also St. Barnabas for putting their money where their mouth is by supporting our co-ops, but more importantly we need all of anchor institutions to commit to raising the levels of procurement in our city from 3% to 15% by 2018 and continue to push that number upward.

“And finally we need more jobs. We have been working hard at Workforce Investment Board, Affirmative Action, and Newark Works with reentry and residents without records. We have been slowly reducing our unemployment numbers in the city but real unemployment is disastrously high. 40 percent of our children grow up in poverty and at least 20 percent of them are food insecure. Our families that work have to choose between rent and food, school clothes or milk for their babies. That is why we choose to fight for an increase in the minimum wage to \$15 at the airport and around the State. This is why we will be sponsoring a displaced workers ordinance that doesn't allow new contractors to arbitrarily get rid of old workers and pay new ones lower wages. Finally, we need a commitment from Newark businesses to hire Newark workers. We will also be authoring in the next few days legislation that will allow any business in Newark that employs 51% of Newarkers in their organization to receive payroll tax abatement, and any business that hires ex-offenders to be exempt from payroll tax for that individual. In the next week or so I will announce a comprehensive jobs plan that calls for at least 17,000 jobs to our city to the tune of almost \$1 billion. I have already introduced this plan to the Obama Administration and have given it out to our federal delegation, and soon to all the candidates running for President. We need an Urban Marshall Plan now! We need investments in our infrastructure, training, services for ex-offenders, youth development, incentives for the private sector and economic investment in America's cities. We can no longer neglect an entire segment of the American population. We can no longer ignore the two Americas Dr. King spoke of. We can no longer neglect Americas growth engines and the growth engine for this State is Newark, New Jersey!

“And now that the battle over St. Michael's has ended and the hospital will remain open, and hopefully the workers will maintain their jobs. Now that the politicians have settled down, and those that got paid from consultants to elected officials have no more reason for headlines and public discourse, maybe NOW we can talk about the quality of our health care. Our infant mortality rate is still four times that of the State. We still suffer from every critical disease disproportionately in this State. In fact seven of the top 10 leading causes of death in our city are from chronic diseases. We have warehouses that make it easier for us to die. We have critical care centers, not places of abundant life. This is not a slight to the great work the doctors do in this city, but it's time for a new direction. We need preventive care. We need more primary care physicians, more clinics accessible in as many neighborhoods as possible. I am asking every health care institution both public and private to invest in health clinics, outpatient facilities, and health care workers that provide education and treatment where people live. We need you to invest in the economic growth of our city - to hire residents, and build housing for your doctors, and nurses here. You can work with the city to develop training and housing programs for primary care physicians to either live or open up a practice here - or both. We can longer create wealth off of the misery of others. While everyone should be entitled to health care - they should also have access to a long and abundant life.

“And finally, while we have been getting real high-minded things accomplished at City Hall, we have to do much better at the delivery of service to our customers. We have to respond to every resident even if we can't help them. The police have to answer every call for help and send help immediately. We have to work harder on cleaning our streets and vacant lots, removing our garbage, and responding to snow emergencies better. We have to fill our potholes and fix our light poles. Tonight we pledge to make a very visible improvement in that area. I can't complain that we don't have snow trucks - I have to find a way to get some. I can't complain that we don't have officers, we have to hire them. Tonight I pledge to you that we are going to revamp the entire Communications Department in Police and Fire to make sure we answer phones and improve our response time. We are going to merge the My Newark app and 311 and create a call center out of the Mayor's Office so I can review all calls and measure progress through metrics and outcomes. We are going to split Recreation and Cultural affairs from Neighborhood Services and create a Department of Public Works. Our job is to empower you, and that begins by making sure we are engaged and responsive to your needs.

“I knew when I took this job that it would be difficult, that I would have to shoulder the last 50 years of crime, poverty, miseducation, and unemployment. Like the President of these United States, I would have to wrestle with naysayers and cynics who cheer every time I stumble, but I say that to stumble means you're just moving forward faster. And we have to remember Newark we didn't do this for accolades, to be cheered on, or praised by our enemies. We took the path least traveled, the course toward freedom. We have to become resigned with the idea that there is light at the end of that tunnel. And whenever we get confused because of something we read on the Internet, or a misguided article by an estranged journalist, a story that runs all day on News 12, or the vultures circling above waiting for us, to clutch the inclination to give up or grow indifferent or worse, curse from the sidelines. You have to understand that the dogs are on our heels because we are almost there and that we rather have them behind us than in front of us. We are moving this City with our heads up. Look around you at the progress

we are making, our feet are moving forward not backward. There is more interest in our City than there has ever been.

“There is development in every Ward. We are finally, after four years, hiring more officers and closing our debt. We went from operating in deficit to ending 2015 in surplus! Our population is increasing and businesses are coming to our city. Don't be fooled by the haters. We are increasing our college students, and are one step away from a 24-hour city. We have moved toward a smarter city - a Newark 3.0. And the most historic moment of all was when I got to ride in the beast! The first African-American President, Barack Obama, came to Newark not to campaign or because we are laying down on the job but because we are working hard and saving lives every day, and we are doing this together! Despite how terrible they try to make us look - don't ever get confused about how far we have come. And every time we fall down we look up and then we get up and we keep pushing forward. I had no expectations of an easy road when I walked into to City Hall on July 1st, 2014. I knew what I was coming into and I prayed to the same God Daniel prayed to in the Lion's Den. The same God Nehemiah counted on as his enemies tried to convince him to come down off that wall. I prayed to same God that Jonah prayed to in the belly of the beast and the same God Job leaned on in times of calamity! We tell no lies - we claim no easy victories. He never promised us easy just that we would win. And as long as we push, when we fight, we win. When we are together there is no mountain to high, no problem to big, and no crisis to great that we can't overcome.”

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