

## **2019 SOTC – Newark, NJ; 03/12/2019**

My mother often told us that we should read the emancipation proclamation, and even gave me a copy of the US Constitution. She said that we celebrated Jan 1 not just because of the new year, but because it represents the day the emancipation proclamation was signed. Jan 1, 1863 was our new year. When I was younger, I could remember having conflict in my head as to the things that I was hearing in my circles. It was just a war document. If Lincoln could've kept slavery and ended the war, he would have. I heard that Lincoln wasn't radical at all and neither was the emancipation document, so why were we making such a big deal of it?

I since read it and grew older and learned that in many places around the country meetings were held, watch parties if you will, to see if this emancipation document would in fact be signed. I learned that Frederick Douglass that day with dozens of other escaped slaves waited intently on the outcome of that day knowing that this day would be the beginning of a new day for almost 4 million slaves. And so while the Emancipation Proclamation was not so radical to young activists in 1980s and 90s, it was incredibly radical to slaves that were haunted by the fugitive slave act of 1850 and a country that built its wealth off the enslavement of Africans. In retrospect, I realized that we spent much more time trying to get people to dislike Lincoln than we did to get them to abhor slavery.

This past February I had a chance to attend the national My Brother's Keeper summit in Oakland, California. Hundreds of young men of color gathered from around the country to discuss ideas and remedies to longstanding systems that work to impede, diminish, even destroy the growth and development of young men of color. My Brother's Keeper is an initiative started by then President Obama after the murder of Trayvon Martin. I raise this because outside of the event was a protest. A group of about a half dozen people yelled from a bullhorn and did their best to disrupt or pull attention away from the summit. Most of the things they were talking about I agreed with. Inequity inherent in the system, the need to do more than this convening, and even some of the things I

wished Obama would've done more about. But I couldn't help to think: how was their protest helping to deal with those very issues? How does making Obama your target at this event help you to organize or win people to your point of view? And most importantly, how is disrupting an event that's bringing young men of color together from all over the country to talk about addressing mass incarceration, criminal justice reform, access to education, local policy changes, and purposefully includes native Americans at the table - how did that become the enemy of our progress? I say that because we are not always clear, and those that believe they are the clearest are sometimes the most confused, clouded by opportunism and the frustration of their inability to move people, but even more so, the confusion of their ideas.

Power is the ability to exert force on an object or mass, either animate or inanimate- and make it move. It's the ability to activate your ideas then put them in motion. I was an activist in 1989 when I led students that took over the administration building at Howard University to remove Lee Atwater from the Board of Trustees. I was an activist when I organized marches to City Hall against police brutality and calling for a police civilian review board. I was an activist when I was arrested at a Council meeting for singing, so people could have the right to speak. I was an activist when we held feeding and clothing drives and taught our students history in Saturday academies. I was an activist when I held teach ins at churches and spoke at schools with rappers of that day and Sistah Souljah. I was an activist when I organized rallies with the Newark Anti-Violence Coalition to speak out against the epidemic of homicide in our community. I was an activist when I traveled to LA at the request of then Mayor SJ and came back and began to organize peace with street gangs. The difference is now I am the Mayor of one of the oldest and most important cities in this country, the economic life-line of this state, one of the most important transportation and tech hubs in this region. An educational powerhouse. A cultural hotbed, with a deep history of people from many parts of this world that settled here. I am the Mayor of this city, the city of my birth by the grace of God and over 70 percent of the people that voted. As the Mayor, I cannot just be an activist, I have to have the mind to build, and do all that I can to get others to

agree to do the same. So tonight we want to show you what in fact we have been building and tell you why we are building it.

Municipal Council, Rev. Clergy, distinguished guests, City of Newark. This is the fifth time I get to present to you the accomplishments of this great city under our watch. And it is with great pleasure and excitement to share with you that today on March 12, 2019 Newark is still moving forward! Forward is just a direction. It doesn't mean or even connote that we have arrived. It doesn't mean that we are perfect. However, it is a clear sign that we are exerting power or force on our ideas and moving them forward. This is our opportunity, now more than ever before, to craft what we want to see and build it. Not just talk about it but build it. Develop an offensive strategy. Not sit on the sidelines and critique, but actually get in the game! Sometimes we are more enamored with the idea that we have discovered the problem, than we are insistent on working collectively for a solution. Building is hard, and building together is even harder, but the outcome will take us farther. We want you to get involved, to be a part of a growing community of builders, of folks who hold their destiny in their own hands, that have not handed over their future to cynicism and hopelessness. Building takes a specific mindset, a stubborn determinism, a get back up mentality. The idea informs the work, but then the work informs the ideas. It's a privileged position to wait for the perfect at the expense of good. Just as It's a privileged position to say the emancipation proclamation was not radical enough if you weren't a runaway slave in 1863

When Amazon first announced their intention to build a new HQ2, we jumped right in. We were one in a list of over 200 cities across the country in a pool of some of the largest wealthiest cities. I watched how people counted us out, even some of us here mired in self-hatred and self-defeat, even rooting for our loss as a way to validate their backward narratives of our city. I read media stories and watched interviews of people saying that this was a terrible idea. Even withstood trolls on social media more concerned with what Amazon was going to do to us and had no clue that it was about what we would do to Amazon.

No one imagined we would make it to the last 20, then the last 10 then, the final cities that Amazon considered. When they came here with their team, they witnessed something most of us miss everyday: Extraordinary collaboration, a clear vision, instruments in place for change and growth, an incredible arts scene, a growing college community, transportation infrastructure, diversity as strength, and beautiful people with a will to win. When they left here, we knew we had already won! The minute they showed up here, we won. The minute every paper began to print why Newark wasn't ready, we had already won. And so when they ask me how I felt when they chose New York or Virginia, I said, and still say, we made it to the game, and we still playing. And to those that see a small window of an opportunity for us to revisit these talks, who are trolling me on social media, I don't have the privilege you have. I actually have to build! You say why are we courting Amazon? I say we are not courting Amazon. We are courting the world through the vehicle of Amazon. We are courting even a measure of those 50,000 direct jobs, or the 70 to 110,000 indirect jobs.

We were courting investment in employee owned businesses, in infrastructure and direct services to our community, from homelessness to scholarships for our children. We say this is not about how powerful Amazon was, but how creative and clear we were in our objectives. This is not the Newark it was when I went to college in 1986. Things are moving and moving fast. Anyone that tries to tell you something different is trying to distract you. Newark is growing. The market is changing. People are interested again. In reality all kinds of things are happening around here. Take a look!

## 2. Economic Development

For the past 4 years or more, we have been working to change the old narratives of Newark, attract more people, create an economic ecosystem that attracts investments, stabilize our housing market, leverage and seed our arts community, support small business growth, encourage buying local, and prepare our residents for what we knew would come if we had the mind to work. Our lift was a heavy one, and now that we have ignited this growth, we have a whole other set of issues. How do we capture the wealth

that is coming into our community? How do we steer Investments to communities that have suffered disinvestment deliberately for 50 years? How do we prevent the displacement that has come with rapid growth in most of our cities? We must create investment ourselves and be imaginative in our approach.

So yes, we have an inclusionary zoning ordinance. We create an equitable growth commission and an office to manage affordability, and make sure local brown and black residents are included in the economic growth, to address the wealth gap that stains this state. We strengthen rent control and begin forcing landlords and developers to register their properties. We establish a right to counsel ordinance to protect our residents from illegal evictions and frivolous attacks by unscrupulous landlords- but at the same time, we encourage home ownership and train our local developers to get and develop property of their own. We encourage them to build, and use monies from inclusionary zoning, if necessary, to fill some of the gaps in local projects. We create home foreclosure assistance programs, and help renters become owners by getting local developers to develop at lower costs and selling properties at lower rates. After the state legislature passes the land bank ordinance, we create a local land bank to manage and dispose of abandoned and vacant properties. We develop neighborhood strategies like Bergen Street Redevelopment Plan to bring life and economy back to a once booming area of the South Ward that has been neglected for years, or the Doremus Ave Redevelopment Plan to encourage capital development with the Port Authority in mind, to create jobs in advanced manufacturing and duty free zones, with better conditions, higher wages and cleaner vehicles.

And we don't want to just focus on big companies to attract jobs and growth. We are encouraging employee ownership, and residential and worker owned cooperatives. As a beginning, the Council just passed an ordinance that's the first of its kind. It encourages employee ownership for Newark based businesses. Company owners that are looking to sell or retire from their businesses will have an option of applying to the city for a loan or loan guarantee when transferring ownership to employees. We have begun to engage

businesses about this idea, where workers can collectively buy the business with no personal investment but receive ownership as a part of their employee benefit package. Businesses of this kind around the country currently employ 13 million workers.

That is just one step to tackle income inequality in this city. We have also worked to create Freedom Paper, an African American owned paper company as part of a community wealth building strategy. We are helping to build a coop paper company with reentry employees. This coop will be both owned by black and brown people, but will also be employee-owned. And we are looking to do a ribbon cutting very soon!

And you saw through our Contractor Development Initiative how we are servicing and preparing an army of folks ready to take on the challenges of developing and building in the city where they live, ready to tackle the countless abandoned and vacant properties in our city and not be defined by what's going to happen in our city, but creating those definitions themselves. They will be armed to predict the future of our city by creating it.

Lastly, the city is currently exploring a pilot for Universal Basic Income. We have already received national recognition and technical assistance from the Economic Security Project and the Jain institute to launch an exploratory taskforce to assess the feasibility of a program in Newark. We believe in Universal Basic Income, especially in a time where studies have shown that families that have a crisis of just 400 dollars in a month may experience a setback that may be difficult even impossible to recover from. Where 1/3 of our city still lives in poverty.

We have a mind to work, and all we ask is that you begin to work with us! Yes, Newark is growing. Yes, people are coming here. Yes, it can be a scary notion as we watch what has happened to cities experiencing rapid growth around the country, but the status quo is also a scary notion, one we have lived with for decades. We do not have the privilege to do nothing, to rail against development in our city, while those that can go, shop, play, and vacation and enjoy in other cities, while opposing them in Newark. We have to be as Frederick Douglass was in 1863 cautious, thoughtful but clear

### 3. Jobs

We know that one of the immediate ways to address poverty, our economy, to stabilize families and even reduce crime is to make sure people have access to good paying jobs. We have been fighting steady and intractable unemployment for years. We are excited to watch the numbers decline as new businesses and development come to our city, as our One Stop places 650 Newark residents in fulltime jobs! And 262 of those are reentry. When I first became mayor, the unemployment rate was 11.2%. Now, we have the lowest unemployment in 50 years. We have employed and trained over 3000 youth in the largest Summer Youth program in the history of this city and state. Now have begun to get them in year round opportunities and internships. Creating a pipeline of employment-ready young people that will take advantage of a growing city.

The engagement of our Corporate and Anchor institutions in employing Newark residents is at an all- time high. We have gotten Newark 2020 on its way, and have created an atmosphere where our anchor institutions want to eradicate the notion that Newark residents are not ready to work in their firms. Are we perfect? No- but we have been building. Prudential, Rutgers, Audible, NJIT, and NJPAC have invested millions on a live local incentive to encourage their workers to choose to live in Newark. As we want them to not just share in Newark's prosperity, but also help us address its challenges. Our local procurement is up as well. That is, we are encouraging our anchors to increase their spending with local businesses. On average the spend was at a dismal 3%. We have gotten that number to 9%, and are still pushing for at least 20 % by 2020. Which means we have much work to do. Rutgers has increased their spending to 26 %. PSEG last year alone spent 253 million on local businesses, an increase of 25 million dollars. Audible has subsidized over 10,000 employee visits to neighborhood restaurants in the past two years alone that directly impacted the local economy and hired over 100 high school students last year in paid internships. We need other corporations to do the same now.

As you take advantage of our college community, our transportation infrastructure, and the unprecedented growth that is happening in our city, we want you to spend some of that money and transfer some of that wealth to the community you are in. Increasing your spending with local business helps them sustain themselves, grow, expand and hire more residents. It helps stabilize communities, improve educational opportunities, and grow our economy. We need all of the institutions big and small in our city to be committed to this idea and to do something about it. We don't need any more studies, no more meetings and conversations. We need you to get on board today. As you saw Newark is made up of real people, with real capacity, with real obstacles in their way, and with opportunity, they can excel! When the rules are clear and fair, when we have chance to shine, we are brilliant.

But we are not just depending on the right actions of our anchors. We are convening a financial empowerment summit for our youth and developing youth entrepreneurship programs, Mini MBA programs for small businesses seeking to grow their capacity and expand, collaborating with Per Scholas, Newark 2020 and the Newark Alliance, to prepare our residents for the tech economy, and collaborating with the New Jersey Department of Labor to prepare, train, and hold positive recruitments for our residents, for growing industries like health care, manufacturing and transportation.

#### 4. Education

I was born in this city. I attended Newark Public Schools, and then went on to Howard University and after that St Peters in Jersey City. My educational experience helped me to begin to achieve the things that I once dreamt about in front of Yosef's Steak and Take, and Avon and 14th St., or the corner of Clinton Ave and 11th street. I experienced the same things that most young people experience in this city, but I had opportunities that most were not afforded. Our job here is not to just go and yell at Board meetings. Our job is to build. To provide the same access to thousands of other kids, and to ensure that you are part of the process that makes sure that all of our children are advancing. Newark City of Learning Collaborative was created to do just that, to make sure that



more of us had post-secondary degrees, advanced degrees, and certifications. We wanted to lift the number of residents that fit that description to 25 percent from 19% by the year 2025, and we will reach that goal and beyond well before then. In doing that, we want to make sure that our growth is just not a product of new people moving to our city, but because we are building foundations and pipelines, opportunities and settings, where our young people here can grow and excel. We have to create a college going culture! The good news is more of our kids are graduating high school, and more of them are enrolling in college. You saw the incredible work that is being done at Rutgers Newark targeting our young people. Two weeks ago, we announced that NJIT will take on 3 Mayor's Scholars per year and increase their enrollment with our students by at least 200 students per year. This collaboration with Newark Board of Education will create teacher-training academies in math and begin to prepare cohorts of our students for this new opportunity. The superintendent is not only committed to finding the 200 students per year but has raised the goal of the school district to have 600 prepared to take advantage of that goal. It is a pleasure to work with a superintendent, raised and living in our city, that has a clear passion and determination for the success of our children. He just announced a huge training academy, the largest in the state, that will create pipelines for our students to become teachers, to put more of us in front of our babies giving them an opportunity to see themselves in their own classrooms.

3 years ago, we opened Newark's first-ever street academy, targeting young people that have dropped out of school and have no steady employment. With a grant from the state, we offered them 10 dollars per hour to re-engage in self education, community service, and social and emotional support. Each year we have become more and more successful and have worked to integrate young people into a growing community that they can have a part in building. We are creating, with the help of Newark Literacy Coalition and the United Way, a culture of reading, with the Mayors Book Club, early childhood interventions, and reading improvement for low literacy adults. We need to make it clear that none of these strategies will be optimal on an island alone. It is imperative that we begin to wrap our entire community around our students, to use

every resource at our disposal to get students in seats in these institutions, both traditional and non-traditional, but to also begin to create a universal design that will allow all of our students to have access to a decent education, no matter where they are.

We have to destroy the inequity that exists in our institutions locally. We have to deliberately make room for underrepresented cohorts in the places where our children are witnessing success. In other words, we have to make room for Black and brown boys that are being left behind systemically and purposefully. We can no longer be satisfied with the one or two tokens we have in AP classes, in pre-college programs, honors tracks, and the list goes on. We have to make a conscious and intentional effort to change this dynamic. This is one of the reasons why we created the Children's Cabinet and the Youth Policy Board. We want to buttress our schools with the support they need from local and national experts and institutions that will assist us in changing the trajectory of our student's outcomes, and to create and think about policy solutions to long-standing obstacles that are killing our babies.

## 5. Youth Leadership

The first few deaths of this year involved our youth. One a young boy beaten by his mother's boyfriend. Another a young beautiful girl, still in high school, went to pay respects at a vigil and was senselessly, cowardly gunned down. Two young boys high school aged died in a stolen car with a gun in their possession. There is an African greeting that starts with How's the Children? And the answer should be the children are fine. Any community can be measured by how well their children are doing or progressing. This is why when President Obama organized the My Brother's Keeper initiative, this administration jumped all over it. The organization has provided mentorship and positive male role models to our youth, has collaborated with Opportunity Youth Network to begin to decrease suspensions of black and brown boys, worked with the Newark Police to create diversionary programs and station house adjustments for more than half of school-based arrests, and to put youth on pathways to high growth job sectors.

And more than anything I am proud of the work we are doing in our youth and college. Every day they are bridging the gap between city government and the youth of our city, by empowering youth from all sectors of our city - from youth ambassadors, health initiatives, rallies against hatred, college travel camps, leadership development, speaking out from the United Nations, to youth town halls. They worked with St Barnabas around food security, Robert Wood Johnson around chronic absenteeism. They have created a safe space for young people to engage the government, the mayor and their own creativity. We need your help with this. We need you to tell every young person to attach themselves to this office. We need parents to stop saying there is nothing for our young people and engage the Office of Youth and College affairs. This is not a sports program or an entertainment program. This is an empowerment program! We change our young people's ideas by changing their conversations. Do your part. Get a young person into one of these conversations or create an opportunity to be a part of the conversation.

## 6. Public Safety

I recently was at University Hospital for a meeting called together to discuss alternative strategies to violence, and more specifically how to use resources to assist victims of violence and break the cycle of hurt and retaliation. I was encouraged to hear one of the doctors that was leading the discussion, and who helps with the hospital's own violence initiative, say that she worked on a victim that came in to the hospital. After she took care of his physical trauma, she connected him to the Newark Street Academy that we talked about earlier to address his emotional trauma, get him on track to be productive, and save his life and possibly others. We are working hard to make Newark a trauma-informed city. To organize our institutions to collaborate with one another and establish policies and procedures that do not ignore our ongoing trauma, but to address it. One such example is a program where we are partnering with the DEA, the Newark Police and our public schools to notify schools when children have been victims, or witnessed trauma after school or over the weekend. The other is what I just described at University

Hospital, in conjunction with the West Ward Violence Reduction Initiative and the Newark Community Street Team.

We have so much more work to do even as we experience unprecedented lows in victims of crime and violence. Reductions in shootings, homicides, robberies. Police recovery of weapons is up 13 percent since I took office, and we witnessed a 30 percent reduction in shooting victims versus 2017. When I was on my way to college in 1986, we had almost 40,000 victims of violence. We have reduced that number exponentially. We have done all the right traditional things. We added precincts to reduce the area police officers have to respond to, giving residents more visibility, better attention, and the ability to get to know their officers. We've stopped the bleeding of losing officers, and have finally reached a point where hiring officers have given us a net gain. We replaced many of the cameras destroyed by Hurricane Sandy with better technology, and have given residents access to them, showing a reduction in crime by 4 percent where the cameras are present. We have at least 8,000 people helping to view their neighborhoods through those cameras.

We have incredible partnerships with surrounding cities and border patrols, a robust relationship with the state police and the US attorney. We work as a team with the County Prosecutor's Office, the FBI and DEA. We are concentrating resources in areas where the crimes are happening or likely to happen. We are using data informed by research, with the help of Rutgers Newark, the Victoria Foundation and Prudential. We have promoted more officers in the department and focused on diversity and command control. We have given officers more training and have relentlessly focused on the most violent offenders in our city. We are now beginning to focus more on domestic violence, as that accounts for many of our aggravated assaults, and a good percentage of our homicides. We are ensuring that domestic violence victims have access to safe housing when in need of relocation, recycling cell phones programmed to dial 911 and giving them to victims. We are creating school-wide responses for children that witness domestic violence and providing healing centers throughout the city. We are going to

make sure that all of our officers are well trained in dealing with domestic violence, and we are going to automatically mobilize our Domestic Violence Response Team for all domestic violence calls.

But even more important than all of that, police contact with the community is up 46%. We are getting more positive contacts with the community and less complaints. Which means we are learning how to reduce crime without violating peoples' constitutional rights! Besides Coffee with a Cop, public safety academies for residents, and Community Comstat, we have more car cameras and body worn cameras. We instituted the Hope One Mobile Unit, an outreach vehicle equipped to address drug addiction that results in homelessness, and often overdose. We bring the services right to the problem. In its first month we have had 302 visitors, 104 mental health placements, 21 rehab referrals, and 30 people trained on Narcan use.

In 2013 I was being hammered for working with gang members. Today we are training and employing them to intervene and interrupt crime, as most of our homicides are a result of personal disputes. They create safe passageways, mediate conflict in the community and hold roundtables to address community trauma that often results in violence and poor relationships between the police and residents. They advocate for victims and work with the hospitals to reduce retaliations and provide services.

Soon we will organize the Brick City PEACE Collective, a convening of all organizations and institutions to work collaboratively under one umbrella to sustain and focus our anti-violence programs and services, to become more effective and to increase their reach. We will also bring together law enforcement agencies starting with our own, to begin to divert monies and spending into alternative strategies and creative opportunities, to stop violence and interrupt trauma with community-borne initiatives. We have already started that work by beginning to embed social workers with police, to address the needs of those surviving violence, and increasing our partnership with our health agencies. This is a holistic way to address violence and crime in our community. It begins with the premise that we are in a constant state of trauma and that trauma

must be addressed, and the first step of that is to recognize the humanity of the people you are servicing, and employ strategies that address the systemic violence we undergo, that eventually leads to physical violence. The police are a part of that strategy and not the strategy itself.

## 7. Quality of Life

We are building every day, improving our city services, and working hard to remedy problems. We have a city run by great people with huge commitment and loyalty to the mission of moving our city forward. They have been able to increase our procurement from Newark businesses by 20 points. Work to make it easier for local business to get help from the city. Try to streamline issues relating to permitting and inspections. With the increased development comes the need for more efficient and durable services. With the help of increased development, a strong finance dept, careful budgeting, and greater revenues we have been help to keep the city on a steady road to recovery. We have moved from dependency on state aid, tax anticipation notes, and layoffs, to a pathway of increasing all salaries to 15 dollars an hour, hiring more police officers, purchasing more equipment, bringing more services in house, paving more streets, and improving recreation and activities for our seniors. And most importantly, Moody's has twice upgraded our bond rating indicating that Newark Forward is exactly what it says, Newark Forward!

I'm excited about the progress being made by our Department of Public Works and our Department of Recreation and Senior Services. Besides the hard investments in equipment- dump trucks, snow plows, garbage trucks, street sweepers, Public Works has been investing in people. Improving their attendance, their commitment to this city. Organizing their processes and beginning to manage complaints a lot better. They are attacking illegal dumping and working to increase the amount of recycling we collect. They are tearing down abandoned structures and working with reentry and homeless to grant them opportunities to help us improve the quality of life in our city.

Our Department of Parks, Recreation and Senior Services has been equally productive. We have increased the amount of senior events and included more intergenerational programming. We are expanding our sports and recreation programs to include gymnastics, bowling, karate, coed softball for adults, and flag football, making better use of Camp Watershed, and renovating many of our parks including Ironbound Stadium, now known as Eddie Morales Field, a project that was 4 decades in the making.

I want to give special thanks to our Department of Water and Sewer Utilities who, when faced with a problem involving corroding lead service lines, acted with professionalism and dedication. They have already delivered more than 33,000 filters and, tomorrow morning, they will break ground on a \$70 million project that, with the help of Governor Murphy, our state legislators and the DEP, will replace all of the lead service lines in Newark.

Lastly in 2018 we created the Newark People's Assembly to be a clearing house, a convening mechanism for community and block organizations, to help them grow and give them direct engagement with city departments, directors and initiatives. Not just as a means to talk at one another or simply to vent, but to create opportunities for real problem solving, to hear ideas and be part of developing creative solutions. We are seeking to nurture a culture of building and a community of builders with a mind to build. We have engaged residents on everything from water issues to development. We are going to begin talking about critical issues of growth, city budgeting process, and ideas around what you want to see in your city, not what people are doing to it.

The Newark People's Assembly will be at the heart of our progress and growth. We need you involved, and not in a cynical way, but in a very real way. And if you come to disrupt people, you will be coming to the wrong meetings, because these meetings are organized to disrupt systems, and more importantly begin to replace them with new ones.

Often times it feels like I have been the mayor for 50 years, not just five. Someone wrote to me on social media that I have been the Mayor for a long time. I guess that's relative.

But I've been a resident 10 times longer. The trajectory of my life and individual progress has been inextricably tied to the growth of this city, and more importantly its equitable growth. We are not stopping now. While the President is fighting to build a wall, Newark was voted as one of the top cities for immigrants to live. While around the country many cities are struggling with the effects of gentrification and development, we have a real opportunity here to begin to tackle these issues, not just in sloganeering and rhetoric, but in a very real way. We have to stop focusing on what may happen, and begin to change what will happen. We have an opportunity here to show the country how to reduce crime significantly, and improve your relationship with the police. How to concentrate on violence and repeat offenders, while employing alternative strategies. How to create a trauma-informed city. We encourage big businesses to come here, and at the same time develop homegrown coops, and support small business growth.

We make government efficient, and open it up to the people at the same time. We increase outcomes for black and brown boys, and expand our labor force to include people that have been purposefully kept out of it, and watch our economy grow. We can increase opportunities for our youth, disrupt the school to prison pipelines, and replace them with college and multiple pathways that lead to sustained success for our children, and ultimately our city. We can take former convicts, gang members etc. and use them to destroy the very thing they thrived off of. We can give our children a voice and an opportunity to lead, and watch them change our city. We can encourage developers to invest in our city with opportunity zones, and get excited about the prospects that that may hold, but at the same time encourage home and business ownership, entrepreneurship, train our people to build, and watch the city grow because of us, not in spite of us. We can do all of these things, but we must have the mind to build!

We cannot be more focused on delineating each other's flaws and attacking each other's efforts, as we are about collaborating, building a collective of ideas, a multitude of pathways with the same destination in mind. We need the mind to build. We have to have the courage to climb mountains of self- discovery, no matter how rough the terrain,



to sing to noisy crowds, to give even when there is nothing left. And be committed to change and growth, even if the idea is not our own, or the person that developed it is not your friend. We have to be willing to journey to unfamiliar places and debate people that don't think like us, without demeaning them. Our desire for self-repair, need to move forward, and propensity to win, has to be a collective focus, big enough to include all of us, and loud enough to drown out the doubt and despair fed to us by those that live off of our missteps and sense of helplessness.

We fall down together. We get up together, and then we move forward together. The problems we have belong to all of us, not just a few of us, so the solutions must naturally come from the collective and not the individual. Our mind has to be focused on building, and the great thing about building is that two things can't occupy the same space at the same time. So when we build, we are also destroying. Destroying what's holding us back and building what will advance us. We are here making inroads in what appears to be insurmountable situations. We have made considerable progress. We are finding light in the darkest places, and using our imagination to see our city in the way it should be, not the way it has been portrayed to us. And when they yell at us to stop, try to discourage us, or tell us what we do won't work, or explain to us how uninformed we are, or how many times we stumble, we will remind them all- that the treasure is in jars of clay as proof that what we do is not just from us, that we are hard pressed on every side, but we are not crushed. Perplexed but not in despair, persecuted but not abandoned, struck down but not destroyed. That death may sometimes be at work in us but so is life! That our destination rests in our own hands. Our outcomes will be measured by the work we do and our city will continue to move forward as long as we have a mind to build!! God Bless you and God Bless the great City of Newark.