

As drafted in preparation for delivery

Thank you, Chicago. From the bottom of my heart, thank you. I just spoke with Toni Preckwinkle. In this election, Toni and I were competitors, but our differences are nothing compared to what we can achieve together. Now that it's over, I know we will work together for the city we both love. Today, you did more than make history. You created a movement for change.

You know, when we started this journey eleven months ago, nobody gave us much of a chance. We were up against powerful interests, a powerful machine and a powerful Mayor.

But I remembered something Martin Luther King said when I was very young. "Faith", he said, "is taking the first step even when you can't see the whole staircase."

Well, we couldn't see the whole staircase when we started this journey, but we had faith. An abiding faith in this city, in its people, and in its future. So, we took that first step. And as Father Mike says, we let our faith overcome our fears. And look at where we are today. Just look at us. We still have faith. We still are determined and with this mandate for change, now we're going to take the next steps, together.

Together we can and will finally put the interests of our people, all of our people, ahead of the interests of a powerful few. Together, we can and will make Chicago a place where your zip code doesn't determine your destiny. That means, we can and we will make our streets—all of our streets—safe again.

We can and we will give every single one of our children—all of our children—access to the high-quality education they deserve. We can and we will give our neighborhoods—all of our neighborhoods—the same time and attention that we give to the downtown.

And we won't just invest in our neighborhoods. We can and will make sure our neighborhoods, and our neighbors—all of our neighbors—are invested in each other. This is not us versus them, or neighborhoods versus downtown. We are in this together and we will grow together.

We can and we will build trust between our people and our brave police officers, so that communities and police trust each other, not fear each other. We can and we will break this city's endless cycle of corruption, and never again, never, ever, allow politicians to profit from their elected positions. Together, we can and will remake Chicago: thriving, prosperous, better, stronger, fairer, for everyone.

Over the last eleven months, every single day I've been reminded, sometimes painfully, that our campaign, our work, matters. I've seen the tears of mothers who've lost their children to our city's plague of senseless gun violence. Maria Pike's son Ricky, a double honors student at Le Cordon Bleu, was gunned down at the age of twenty-four. Michele Dowdy's son Malcolm, a veteran of the US Coast Guard, was killed by a stray bullet, fired blindly into a crowd, at the age of 33. Milagros Burgos' daughter Alexandria was sitting in a friend's house when a bullet came through the window and killed her. She was just eighteen years old. These mothers cried and then, with courage and determination, turned their tears into a demand for change, setting up organizations like Moms Demand Action.

Our duty as a city, as leaders, as neighbors, as people, is to stand with these mothers and children and put an end to this gun violence once and for all. We must say: Enough is enough.

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I've met small business owners who want to start or grow their businesses, but say it takes two years just to get a permit, a license or a sign. These business owners are part of the economic engine of our city. They serve their neighborhoods and create jobs, and they just want a city government that's a help, not a hindrance. It's not too much to ask. So, we're going to help our small businesses and not stand in their way.

I've met families from our immigrant communities, people from Mexico, people from Central and South America, people from the Middle East, Asia, and Africa, people from all over the world. And these people are scared. They're scared of the climate of hate and fear, fanned and promoted by a culture in Washington, D.C., and from the White House, in the capital of our own country. They're our neighbors, and they're scared of a knock on their door in the middle of the night, followed by agents coming in to haul them away.

For one hundred fifty years, Chicago has welcomed generations of immigrants, from all over the world and from all over America. They built this city and made it what it is today. Now, it is our solemn duty as a city, as people, as neighbors, to stand up for our immigrant families, to protect them, to stand against the hate, and to make sure Chicago is a place that will welcome immigrants for the next hundred fifty years.

Recently, a student heading off to college asked me an important question. When I graduate, he asked, "Why should I come back here to Chicago? What will you do in four years to convince me to come back?" Questions like this are on a lot of people's minds. Should I move here? Should I stay? Our duty is to make sure the answer is a resounding YES. Everything, literally everything, depends on it. A shrinking city, which is where we are right now, just will not do. To thrive, Chicago must grow. It simply must.

And if we make our streets safer, our schools better, our neighborhoods stronger, our businesses, large and small, more prosperous, then people will want to stay here, and they will want move here. If we work together to solve our toughest challenges, Chicago will grow again. We cannot afford to fail.

Out there tonight a lot of little girls and boys are watching. They're watching us. And they're seeing the beginning of something, well, a little different. They're seeing a city reborn, a city where it doesn't matter what color you are, where it sure doesn't matter how tall you are, where it doesn't matter who you love, just as long as you love with all your heart.

In the Chicago we will build together we will celebrate our differences. We will embrace our uniqueness. And we will make certain that we all have every opportunity to succeed Every child out there should know this: Each of you, one day, can be the Mayor of Chicago.

Wanna know why?

Just look right here.

One day, you will stand on my shoulders as I stand on the shoulders of so many others. The shoulders of strong black women like Ida B. Wells, Gwendolyn Brooks, and Annie Ruth Lowery. The shoulders of LGBTQ+ trailblazers like Dr. Ron Sable, Vernita Gray, and Art Johnston. The shoulders of political giants like the late great Mayor Harold Washington.

And you will stand on the shoulders of your families, just as I have.

My parents didn't have it easy. My dad got really sick and slipped into a coma for a year, a whole year, and woke up without the ability to hear anything. He lived the rest of his life

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with this disability, worked as a barber and janitor, and put up with the racism in our segregated steel town. My mom worked low wage jobs in mental hospitals and nursing homes. My parents didn't have much money, but they had their dignity and their dreams, dreams for their children, dreams for me.

They taught me the value of honesty, decency, hard work, and education. And they gave me faith, the faith that put me where I am today. My mom is watching this tonight, with more than a little pride in her little girl. My dad isn't with us anymore. But Dad, wherever you are, look at your daughter. Look at everyone here. Look at this great city. Thank you, Dad. Your sacrifices have been borne anew. We made it.

And I sure wouldn't have made it without my wife, Amy and our daughter, Vivian. I thank you for your inspiration, your endless support at the toughest times, and your undying love. You are my all, my everything. There are too many people to thank individually but I've got to mention a few.

First, our great campaign staff – those who have been with us from the very beginning and those who have joined us along the way. Your efforts have been tireless, determined and your enthusiasm, contagious. I am honored by your sacrifice and your service. Thank you.

I must also thank our incredible volunteers. If you gave an hour or a thousand, it all mattered and helped propel us to this moment. I must also thank our friends in organized labor, the backbone of this great city. You truly make Chicago work, like none other and I thank you. And to all of the teachers who supported us, thank you. And of course I must thank our family and close circle of friends, here and elsewhere. You sustain me and Amy and Viv today and every day.

My friends grab the hand of the person next to you. You may be strangers, but in this room, in this city, we are all neighbors. I want you to feel the power of unity, neighbor to neighbor, that comes when we unite, and join together as one Chicago, indivisible, and united for all.

When I was a little girl, I remember singing the song...“This little light of mine ...I'm gonna let it shine.” We've said it's time to bring in the light. And it's sure shining on all of us tonight. Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine. Thank you very much. God bless you all.

And God bless Chicago.

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