

Mayor's Inaugural Address

On December 13, 1819, the City of Tuscaloosa was officially born beside our beautiful river. For our founders, as it was for the Creek and Choctaws Indians who traveled this land centuries before them, Tuscaloosa offered the opportunity for a better life.

Since that humble beginning, our City has prospered thanks to the service of dedicated men and women with a vision for capturing the promise of Tuscaloosa.

Today, as we begin anew, with a resolve to secure a brighter future for our community, I want to honor a man whose work I have sworn an oath to continue. Born and raised in the back waters of Louisiana, tried and tested on the beaches of Normandy, Mayor DuPont arrived in Tuscaloosa nearly 60 years ago as a casualty of war.

When Mayor DuPont left Louisiana, Tuscaloosa was not supposed to be his final destination, but his misfortune became our fortune and Margaret's too.

Today, he ends his successful tenure as Tuscaloosa's 35th Mayor, but his contributions will continue to provide the foundation as we build that bridge to the future.

To Mayor DuPont and Ms. DuPont (who cannot be here), on behalf of a grateful City, I want to thank you and say job well done.

The freedom to speak our minds and select a candidate is the cornerstone of our republic, but too often the election process tends to divide us on our differences instead of uniting us on our common beliefs.

Tuscaloosa has just weathered its political season in which we experienced periods of calm followed by moments of storms. It is during these storms that we tend to focus on the misgivings of the past and the uncertainty of the future.

Today, during this most celebrated exercise of democracy, we declare an end to the political season and we again recognize the common thread which runs deep in the fabric of our community and that is our love for Tuscaloosa.

Ralph Waldo Emerson eloquently stated that "What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within in us."

During the next four years, what will lie within our administration are the unyielding beliefs that the best days of Tuscaloosa are in front us and that we can be that "Shining City on a Hill."

To that end, we will work hard every single day to accomplish the following beliefs:

First, we will carry the belief that western Tuscaloosa and too many other parts of our City, who have not seen the economic gains of the past decade, can again thrive both residentially and commercially.

Second, we will hold the belief that this historic building behind me belongs to all of us and that our work should open, efficient and customer friendly.

Next, we will hold the belief that comprehensive planning is essential to preserving the integrity of our neighborhoods, promoting economic development and ensuring a sense of community.

Fourth, we will hold the belief that every person, regardless of who you are or where you come from, should be safe and secure within any corner of our City. And, when trouble arises, whether it is a crime, fire or an act of nature, our response will be swift and effective.

City Hall represents many things to many people. For me, it stands as a symbol of hope and opportunity, especially for that whose voices are not counted at the ballot boxes and that is our children.

Although we are not legally charged with providing for the education of our students, past City fathers have wisely partnered with our Board of Education to build neighborhood high schools, upgrade technology and provide extra teachers for diverse academic programs.

Our children need this to continue, especially among our youngest who have been born to poverty and broken families.

Therefore, we will carry the belief that we must provide quality pre-k programs to all children at-risk, so that we break the horrific cycle of children who cannot read.

Today, "the torch has been passed" and the spirit of this City is vibrant and awakening to the winds of change which are revitalizing the very core of our community.

Just down the hill, the winds of change are reshaping the riverfront on which our City was born. History does repeat itself as we now turn towards the river as a source for the cultural arts, jobs, and a higher quality of life.

Within the downtown area, the winds of change are transforming 16 city blocks. Within the next few years, our downtown will be linked with our riverfront, and we will truly have a community where you can live, work and play.

The winds of change are ushering in a spirit of brotherhood unmatched in our history. This was proved evident as the City Council selected Harrison Taylor as their President for the next four years.

Their selection was not based on the color of his skin, but on his qualifications as leader and his heart for leading our City.

Councilman Taylor, you are my friend and my colleague and I look forward to working with you and the council.

Indeed the winds of change are here and as we prepare to build a bridge to the future let us heed the words of Robert Kennedy who said:

"The future does not belong to those who are content with today, apathetic toward common problems... and timid in the face of bold projects and new ideas. Rather, it will belong to those who can blend passion, reason and courage in a personal commitment to the great enterprises and ideals of American society."

To the people of Tuscaloosa, it is with a humbled heart and great anticipation that I have this opportunity to serve you as Tuscaloosa's 36th Mayor.

We will not bide time for the promise of Tuscaloosa awaits us as it did for our founders nearly two hundred years ago.

Today, on the steps of this historic building, I pledge to lead with boldness, determination and creativity and govern with passion, reason and courage.

May God Bless You and May God Continue his Blessings on the City of Tuscaloosa!