



Mayor-President Sharon Weston Broome's Inaugural Address January 2, 2017

I want to thank you all of you for sharing this experience with me today. I'm honored to serve this community as your Mayor-President.

It's been said that "No one who achieves success does so without the help of others." I want to pause and acknowledge those who helped me on this journey. From my campaign team, to my campaign advisors, to those who knocked on doors, put out signs, made phone calls, to those who donated dollars, to the other candidates who supported me in the runoff – whatever role you played in getting me to this place in history today – I am deeply grateful to each one of you. To the transition leaders and transition teams who are still hard at work, I say "thank you."

To my amazing family and friends who have come from around the country to help us celebrate – thank you. Joining me on the stage is our son David, my daughter in law, Carrie; my daughter Sarah, my son in law Sie, and my three grandchildren; and my son Daniel and his friend Raven. Also joining me as my special guests is Gladys Hammond, the mother of the late Ronnie Edwards and Claudia Hawkins, the widow of the late Willie Hawkins.

Right now, we are not culminating a ceremony about just one person. Instead, we are beginning a new chapter for all of this parish.

Just as election night moved us from campaigning to transitioning...today we pass the baton from preparing to lead...to actively leading this city forward.

I have asked that each of you be provided a small piece of cloth to serve as an illustration of not only the heart of my message today, but the foundation of my administration as Mayor President.

We gather together at a time when in so many ways the very fabric of our community has been torn into countless pieces. Violence, tragedy, disaster and neglect are among the many culprits that have cut away at us.

Many would look upon the challenges facing us and choose to define us by the different and diverse pieces that exist. I stand before you today excited at the opportunity to help lead the bringing together of our different and disparate pieces of cloth into a wonderful, colorful, distinctive, and inclusive quilt that will be the "new Baton Rouge".

Together we will utilize the common threads of respect, opportunity, fairness, inclusion, equity and optimism to weave an amazing tapestry of growth and progress that touches every area of this parish and beyond.

But these threads of respect, opportunity, fairness, inclusion, equity and optimism must be real in order to hold us together. They must be made manifest in the budgets we craft, the ordinances we pass, the decisions we make and the resources we invest. The systems and structures we put and have in place must operate in support of these threads, or it is all meaningless.

In virtually no other area has this tearing at the fabric of our community been more visible and pronounced than in the relationship between those entrusted with the honored responsibility to protect and serve this community, and a large segment of the very community they serve. We

cannot go forward as a community without collectively addressing the critical issue of police-community relations. We must do so in a way that invites all parties to come out of their respective corners and find a place where we can agree to work together to repair the breach and move forward in a way that makes Baton Rouge a better, safer and thriving place for all its citizens. Our police officers should expect to be well trained, well paid and provided the resources needed to accomplish the trusted role they play in our city. The members of our community should expect professional policing from men and women who treat all members of our community with dignity and respect.

I will engage the services of a team of unparalleled experienced and capable individuals to provide guidance in the training, structures, systems, policies and resources needed to support our men and women in blue and the people of Baton Rouge experience 21st century professional policing. This effort will progress under my direction and watchful eye.

Along with community - police relations, the flood waters of this summer left many in our area tattered and torn. Full recovery is a must and as such will be a priority in my administration. In order to ensure this priority status, I will assign one of the Administrative Officers in the Mayor's Office the lead role in our recovery efforts. Every day that this person reports to work, a major part of their responsibilities will be to ensure progress in not only our recovery, but the building of a more resilient Baton Rouge for the future. I have met with and discussed this matter with Governor John Bel Edwards. I am assured of his ongoing partnership and commitment to the attention and best effort of the State to make the needed resources available to our community. I have also reached out to the members of the Recovery Task force who are

from Baton Rouge to express my desire to work together with them to strategically use that platform in the best interest of our region. Beyond this, I will partner with our congressional and legislative delegations, along with the leaders of surrounding impacted communities to craft a collaborative and informed path forward.

As I have committed to work diligently on flood recovery, I will work to do something about traffic and keep the Capital City moving. We must stop talking about traffic and DO something about it. There will be a member of my executive team who will have the responsibility of waking up everyday spending time on a coordinated and progressive approach to remediating the horrific situation that is our traffic. Again, we will enlist the partnership and support of our members of congress, Louisiana legislature, and surrounding community leaders to take tangible and concrete steps over the next four years to lessen the frustration that is driving in and around Baton Rouge. There are a number of initiatives already in progress and a number of others already identified that would serve to be helpful in a more free flowing pattern to our traffic. My commitment to you is convene those with the knowledge and innovative thinking needed to identify and recommend a specific course of action. This will occur in the earliest days of my administration.

But it is equally important that we not respond to our traffic challenges in ways that harm the quality of life for those who live in Baton Rouge. I remain committed to the concept of complete streets and smart and equitable growth. Baton Rouge must continue the journey into becoming a place where biking and walking are still acceptable ways to move around our city. Our public transportation absolutely must become better at being a viable means of traversing our city. Trains, trams and

zip cars must be embraced as components to a comprehensive transportation agenda – that includes ALL corners of the city and that makes Baton Rouge the progressive and thriving community we desire.

The torn pieces of fabric are unfortunately far too appropriate a metaphor for the land use, development and growth of Baton Rouge. In too many instances there does not appear to be a well understood and adhered to pattern that drives our work. Too many entities whose work overlaps with each other, work in silos uninformed or unconcerned with the direction and efforts of one another. As a result we fail to maximize available resources and advance in a patchwork fashion. We deserve better. It is my plan to convene the leadership of the Office of Community Development, the Redevelopment Authority and the East Baton Rouge Housing Authority to establish a collaborative understanding on how we grow forward as a city and parish. To be fair, there are conversations that have been taking place around this idea already. But I will interject myself, my team and capable members of our community into these discussions. I will likewise make clear to those under my appointing authority my vision for this work and that failure and the status quo are equally unacceptable.

When the fabric of our community is torn, our children fall through the cracks. They are...in terrifying numbers and traumatic ways. This must end. One of the major undertakings of my administration will be the Cradle to K initiative. This comprehensive approach to the best start possible will begin with maximizing the use of current resources and structures toward a specific set of measurable outcomes for the youngest and most vulnerable members of our community. I will enlist a cadre of passionate subject matter experts to serve as my "cabinet" in

this matter and will update the community regularly on our strategies and progress.

But our concern for our children cannot end at kindergarten. Every child in our city deserves an excellent education. But excellent educations don't just happen and the children are not the responsible parties in whether it does or not. We must accept responsibility for the quality of the educational systems, structures and outcomes in Baton Rouge. To that end, I will be the Advocate in Chief for strengthening the way our children experience teaching and learning. I have already spoken with Superintendent Warren Drake to express my desire to support efforts aimed at bringing excellence to the entire system. I will convene the members of the School Board and the Metro Council to discuss the critical role education plays in elevating a community and the need for us to bring all our resources to bear to change the trajectory of the lives of so many of our children.

But even then, young people who prepare themselves must be able to find opportunity in their hometown. Too often real opportunity is based on who you know, where you live or other artificial, human confected obstacles. This must change. The trained, skilled, professionals, entrepreneurs and small business owners must be able to access the economic opportunities in our community, especially those created by their tax dollars. As your Mayor President, I am committed to eliminating barriers and creating access for all businesses and professions to participate in the economics of our government and the larger economy. To make this commitment real, I will undertake the Equity in Business Development Initiative. This initiative will be tasked with evaluating the purchasing and contracting practices of the City Parish government and propose tangible steps to increase access to small and disadvantaged

business from all parts of our city. This effort will not be about equal outcomes, but rather, equal opportunity.

There are two final aspects of the fabric of our community that must be addressed; division and race.

A significant amount of time was spent during the campaign discussing the many ways in which we are divided and seek to divide even more so. Please hear me when I say to you that my statements about unifying our parish was not just campaign rhetoric. It is my determined resolve to commit myself and my administration to repairing and strengthening the ties that bind as a community. We will intentionally create opportunities for real and meaningful chances to connect, talk to and work with one another. Above all else we will commit to constructively honest with each other. I personally invite every person motivated by good will to join me in bringing us closer as a people. By the same token, I want to be clear that I will be an active opponent to any and all efforts, actions and agendas that serve to divide us by race, socioeconomic status or geography. I am willing to be proactive with anyone who would like to discuss how to avoid needless conflicts going forward.

And then there is the matter of race. We cannot afford to allow well-intentioned but misguided thoughts around tact and appropriateness to inhibit our ability to discuss our Achilles heel in ways that build up our community. I will insist that every person that is a part of my cabinet complete the Dialogue on Race process. In addition, I will be supportive of other endeavors that are emerging in the city that serve to tear down the artificial barriers that divide us by race. We must create a different, positive and inclusive future for our children. We must demonstrate that

every human has value and has the potential to contribute. We must become intentionally welcoming of our Hispanic, Asian and other neighbors. The ignorant and limiting perspective of our past must be eliminated, permanently.

Then, and only then will be able to truly stitch together a quilt that is the "new Baton Rouge". A Baton Rouge that treasures our differences and invites us all to take our place in this wonderful quilt. A Baton Rouge where our children are embraced and empowered. A Baton Rouge where the entrepreneurial spirit is nurtured and thrives. A Baton Rouge where no part of our community feels neglected and marginalized, but all see the opportunity to pursue their dreams and aspirations.

This is the Baton Rouge I am thankful to God to have the chance to serve and lead. No matter who you are...No matter where you are from...No matter who you voted for...I will be YOUR Mayor-President. It's a time for open doors...It's a time to hold a number of seats at the table of problem solving. Allow me to put you on notice, I will not be perfect but I will always be honest and give my best effort. I will work hard and smart to help build a community we can all be proud of. I ask for your prayers, support and willingness to work to quilt together a tapestry hope, opportunity and growth.

Thank you and may God bless each and every one of you, and may God richly bless our city and parish!