

## **Rough Transcript**

Thank you so much for being here today. I am truly humbled and honored to stand before you as the 57th Mayor of the greatest city in the world. And I truly believe that it's not just the incredible natural beauty of our city.

As you look out over Lake Michigan, it's not just the outstanding food from pizza to Italian beef to the vegetarian tacos. It's not just our art and music that pushes the boundaries and redefines genres. Oh, I believe what truly makes us great is our people. And not just the names that show up in our history books, but the ones that show up in our schools, on the beat, at the worksite, at the concert hall.

And of course, in the boardrooms and of course at the respite center looking out for strangers in need. Chicagoans, we show up and we have leaders who show up, too. And that's why I'm grateful we have Governor J.B. Pritzker, Lieutenant Governor Juliana Stratton, Senator Dick Durbin, Senator Tammy Duckworth, Senate President Don Harmon, the first Black speaker, House Speaker Chris Welch.

Our entire Congressional delegation, Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle, the members of the General Assembly and of course my former colleagues at the Cook County Board and every other elected leader who was here today. Thank you for your service and thank you for being here. And to the city Treasurer Melissa Conyears-Ervin and the city clerk, Anna Valencia, congratulations on your inaugurations.

I look forward to serving with both of you and building a stronger city together and to the members of the city council and especially the 13 newly elected all the persons. Congratulations. This is your day to and you deserve recognition and I'm to turn around and clap for them. I want to make this clear. The people of Chicago are counting on us to work together, to collaborate, to make their lives better every day.

Now, we won't always agree, but I won't ever question your motives or your commitment. And I'll always do my part to find common ground. I like to thank Mayor Lori Lightfoot and her leadership of our city through turbulent times. Let us not forget that Mayor Lightfoot made history twice as the first Black woman and the first openly gay LGBTQ mayor.

And in doing so, she broadened the imagination of so many young people across this city, including my daughter Lori. I am grateful to you for your service and your sacrifice. And to my extended family here today. I didn't know how many cousins I had until I ran for mayor and to my cousins, but also my three children, Owen, Ethan and Brayden, and of course, my wife, Stacie.

None of this would be possible for me nearly as much without you. And of course, you all know I got to brag a little bit about my wife because I may be getting inaugurated, but Stacie is the one making history today as the first Black first lady in the history of Chicago. Stacie, your love and care for Chicago is only dwarfed by your love for our family.

Thank you for everything that you do every single day and everything you will do for Chicago. Now, look, I'll be honest with you. All this is still very humbling for me because I have to tell you, growing up, I never imagined I could be on a stage like this. Growing up one of ten in a working class family.

It teaches you a lot about things. But I never could have foreseen this. Now, make no mistake about it, that doesn't mean that I'm not prepared.

In fact, I think often about my upbringing and the lessons that my parents and my siblings instilled. My mother is not here today. She's an ancestor. But my mother had the biggest heart of anyone that I. She always made room for one more at the table. A cousin, a neighbor, someone in need of a warm meal and a warm embrace.

She taught me to love people, and that's ultimately the reason I stand before you today. And I can feel your woman, Jean Johnson, in this room. Now, my father is here. He taught me what it means to work hard and to be accountable. This brother worked jobs. Now he was a carpenter and a pastor. You understand the pressure of growing up in a house when your father, just like Jesus.

I've learned my core values of hard work and accountability and love that formed foundation for my approach to public service. And now I stand before you today as the new mayor of the nation's third largest city, a place where it's a hope and to have opportunity. It's been here for decades, met with the promise and the possibility that only a place like Chicago can provide.

There is something special about this city. I like to call it the soul of Chicago. Karen Clark's here. This is where I believe in our faith tradition. We start to say. I think I feel my help coming.

It is alive in each and every one of us here today. And it's always been the strong and the heart of everyone who has ever called this land home. I'm talking about the soul of Chicago to live in the hearts of the Miami, the Salk, the Potawatomi who lived on this land for centuries. The soul of Chicago sent a Black Haitian man named Jean Baptiste Point du Sable to establish a city at the mouth of the Chicago River.

It was alive in the hearts of tens of thousands who arrived here in the Great Migration, including my grandparents who came to Chicago in search of a home. They injected the soul the rhythm combined with the traditions, the traditions of the South, like the blues and, of course, a new cadence, making Chicago the center of both Black enterprise and Black freedom struggles.

It is the soul of Chicago that brought immigrants from all over the world to work, to organize, to build the first sky skyscraper, to flee persecution in one country and create an entire industry in another country, including one of the largest hospitality companies in the world. I'm talking about the of Chicago, because that same soul spurred two immigrants

from Guatemala to Humboldt Park where they raised a daughter named Delia Ramirez, who would grow up to make our city proud as a member of the United States Congress.

Congresswoman Ramirez was born in the same public hospital where I am a child of the Great Migration, received life saving asthma treatment. I'm talking about the soul of Chicago. That, my friends, is the rich soul of Chicago. That soul is what strikes me today. I'm marveling.

Boy West as I everywhere. Because if you didn't know. No, you're no, I'm marveling not just at the peaceful transfer of power or the miracle of American democracy or the grand tradition of Chicago elections. It is how much we all share. I'm struck by how much work it took to bring us to this moment and how many decades of slow grinding progress.

Think about the labor movement, which produced luminaries like my mentor and dear sister Karen Lewis, who mattered through social justice unionism and helped lead the multiracial, multi-cultural working class movement that organized its way to this moment. The same labor movement that raise wages, establish the 40 hour workweek and built the middle class in this city from the civil rights movement embodied by our very own brother, Reverend Jesse Jackson, singing, which abolished racial segregation in our laws and gave us the Voting Rights Act from Woman's Right movement, led by Chicago's Jane Addams, and Out of the Wills, which ensured women would participate fully in every part of civil life.

In fact, we all are here because of the work of giants who came before us and without whom this day would not be possible. I bring that up because so often in politics we think and talk and argue about the things that divide us. I want to be clear about something. Those divisions are real. Yes, they are. There are many people who love our city deeply.

We have radically different ideas about how to confront the shared challenges that we face. It's true. I know we need revenue.

We have a structural deficit and we have to invest in people. And we have to do without breaking the backs of working people. What fines, fees and property taxes? You can't make people feel bad because they have a payment plan.

You can stop someone with a payment plan from becoming mayor of the city of Chicago.

Oh, my help is coming this morning.

But too many Chicagoans, though, fear for their safety. And when they walk down the streets to get groceries or drive to the gas station, because our city's homicide and violent crime rates have consistently outpaced our peer cities, our public transit is unreliable and unsafe. So much so that many parents refuse to their children ride, even when the CTA could be the pathway to opportunity and enrichment.

Rent in Chicago continues to go up year after year after year, while the development of both the Affordable and market rate housing stagnates. And as a result to many in our city, go to sleep unhoused and too few families know the security of owning their own home.

Our downtown commercial corridors still bear the scars of the pandemic, with higher vacancy rates and lower foot traffic. And of course, our neighborhoods, particularly those on the south and west side, have still not tasted the fruits of the investments that they demand and deserve.

Our schools call out for more resources to fulfill their mandate of providing every single child in our city with a world class education that meets their specific needs. And despite the trauma, these challenges produce, too few can rely on the consistent access to mental health care that they desperately need. But as we debate and discuss the solutions to these crises, I want to remind us that we have the real conversation.

And that conversation is about the soul of Chicago. It's a life. It's alive and well. And each and every one of us. We have so much in common, you all. They really do. And we know that we all suffer when these ills are allowed to fester and grow. These problems don't just affect particular neighborhoods. One community or an ethnic group affects all of us.

You know the tears of Adam Toledo. His parents. The tears of Adam Toledo's parents are made of the same sorrow as the parents of Officer Preston's parents and relatives. Officer Preston's tragic death at the age of 24. Just last week reminds us what is really at stake when we talk about the future of Chicago. We have to be we have to be very clear about what's at stake, because she joined the Chicago Police Department for the very same reason that I ran to become the next mayor of the city of Chicago.

She believed that through public service, she could be a conduit for justice to the family of Officer Preston. My heart is with you and know we will be with you every step of the way. Thank you for sharing your extraordinary daughter with the city of Chicago now. Thank you.

Honoring public servants like Officer Preston means truly addressing the challenges we face. But the only way that we can truly confront and address those challenges is by working together and coming together.

Now, we can't do it in a phony way, in an artificial way that pretends that differences don't exist. But I'm talking about in a deeper way, a deeper way that acknowledges the strength of what makes this city so strong and great. I'm talking about a strength that binds us in the face of our unique perspectives.

All of us in this room today, all of us in this room today are the product of our own stories. And each and every one of us has a story to not only tell, but lift up and all of us in this room have the ability to take action to be the courageous men and women who came before us.

And that means that means right now we get to write the story of our children's and our grandchildren's futures. If we get to do that together. And what will that story say? What will it say that Chicago, with this sturdy shoulders and its diverse economy and the legacy of all of our generosity, was too afraid to stand up today?

Is that what our story will say? And a true leader, Mr. Johnson. Yeah.

Thank you. We get to tell a different story. I'm talking about a story that, again, that binds us together. We don't want our story to be told that we were unable to house the unhoused or provide a safe harbor for those who are seeking refuge here, because there's enough room for everyone in the city of Chicago. Whether you are seeking asylum or you are looking for a fully funded neighborhood, we don't want our story to say that we did not invest in all of the people and all of the communities that make our city great.

We don't want that to be our story.

Cannot afford to get it wrong. Chicago, We don't want Chicago that has been overwhelmed by the traumatization of violence and despair that our residents felt no hope or no choice but to leave. Shrinking our economy and making it difficult for this city to remain a world class city. I don't want that. Chicago, our city, gets to be as big as its promises.

Our city gets to be as wide as our neighborhoods across the city, all 77 neighborhoods. That's the story. It's our neighborhoods. I'm breathing it in you all. I'm just breathing it in. And so, again, I'll repeat it again. We don't want our story to be that Chicago came so traumatized by violence, despair that our residents felt no other choice but to leave us.

And so what better days had Chicago? Our stories get to reach well beyond this moment? They do. And I'm grateful that I will be working with the body of government that is committed to that transformation. I'm in charge. But here's the thing, though. It won't be. That will not be our story. Not on my watch, because we right now together, are committing ourselves to writing a different future.

As a pastor, son, I'm reminded of a scripture. Matthew 6:21 four Where your treasure is there, your heart will be also. And let's show the world Chicago where our heart is. Let's build a Chicago that is the economic marvel of our state, the Midwest and this nation. Let's build a Chicago. That means that our economy gets to grow by rerouting the rivers of prosperity to the banks of disinvestment so that no one goes thirsty.

Too much of our land is dry right now, and we have to change that. And we can see I live in one of those drier communities, the beautiful Austin neighborhood on the mighty West of Chicago.

And the very fact that the Mayor of Chicago lives in one of the most disinvested and violent communities in the city. It shows us what's possible. And so let's not be discouraged by what it is. Let's make sure that we never stop imagining of what it could be. So we'll create a Chicago where the big development projects get done.

The poor have a pathway out of poverty. And large events like the Democratic Convention that will generate a vitality in every single neighborhood that that gets done. Where our cultural institutions, whether it's our sporting events, hotels in a world class restaurants are supported, promoted and accessible, not just to those from every corner of the world, but for those from every corner of the city by imagining what is possible.

By doing this, we can create a prosperous city which no one is too poor to live in. One of the richest cities in one of the wealthiest countries, at the richest time in the history of the world. And so that means I'm talking about a Chicago where 65,000 people don't wake up on the streets or in a shelter where public housing and affordable housing and a pathway to homeownership exists for everyone.

I'm talking about a city where it will no longer be the case where every network dollar belonging to a white family, where only \$0.08 belongs to a brown family and only \$0.01 belongs to a black family. We can do it, Chicago. We can bring Chicago home. My family is living proof of the type of transformation that can happen with real investments.

We'll create Chicago, where pathways to college and the high tech industries and the future exist alongside the pathways to the trades and apprenticeships and the arts, where every young person has a chance to pursue their passion and get a W2 where business is community, labor, philanthropy, work together to connect every young person to an opportunity to fulfill their potential.

Where introduce these opportunities to young people as young as six, seven and eight years old and open up their minds to a world that could be. I'm about the soul of Chicago. And so. Gary, Bob, Jim, Don, we need your leadership. Richard, Marty, Linda. We need your business expertise. We need your organizing.

And so, listen, this is not a call out. This is what organizers refer to as a call in. And I'm talking about calling in the wisdom of the soul of Chicago, calling in the compassion of the soul of Chicago, calling in the expertise. I'm talking about calling in every single person in the city of Chicago to build a city that works for everyone.

So, let's get to work. Where we doubled the amount of young people that we hire. Some say that we have to wait 20 years for the efforts to pay dividends. I don't believe that we can change the lives of people in Chicago right now. So, let's show our heart is in our young people's education. Let's create a public education system that resources children based on need and not just on numbers where every single child in every neighborhood, whether they fill out an application or not, whether they are bilingual or not, special needs or not has access to a world class education.

Let's have a system that respects this parents, educators and school employees. We're the president of the Chicago Teachers Union and SEIU Local 73 and the CEO of the Chicago Public Schools can work together to advocate for more resources for of our children. So, Stacy, Diane, Pedro, I need you. We can do this together. Tony and Juan, let's the same thing for city colleges, which should be a gateway to opportunity for all of our neighborhoods.

And so while we're at it, let's work together to make sure that there is child care for all for every single person in the city of Chicago.

So, Greg, Erica, Maggie and Mr. Governor, let's do it. Let's do it together. I want to work with you to make sure that we are providing support for working parents and giving children

the nourishment that they need day one. And how about we also create a Chicago where the hundreds of thousands suffering from episodic mental health receive treatment in that trauma?

Because people like my late brother Leon, who died addicted and unhoused. If only there was treatment. I want to make sure that no one ever has to suffer because they do not have access to mental health services. And people have told us no for too long. It's a matter of life and death. So let's bring together the private sector, the public sector, the county, the state and the federal government to find the best solutions for delivering these services, including reopening our mental health care centers across the city of Chicago.

So let's get to work. Chicago, Cheryl. Rosanna, President Preckwinkle and Roberta, we need your leadership. Let's get this right for future generations here. I actually believe we can even do something really bold and fix our public transportation system.

We can secure safety and convenience for cyclists while making significant investments in the liability, the safety and the connectivity of our busses and trains in every single neighborhood. These investments won't just benefit our economy. They'll result in a safer, more livable city for all of us. And once and for all, let's create a safer Chicago. A safe Chicago means a safe Chicago for all.

No matter what you look like, who you love, or where you live, we'll do it together by investing in people. We'll invest in housing, mental health and youth jobs and higher wages. And Real economic development in every community. We'll do it by supporting law enforcement, especially those who are serving on the front lines. That means providing them with direct lines of supervision, clear expert expectations for their work, and equal opportunities for advancement and stronger accountability and support for every stakeholder in this city.

Our faith leaders, our philanthropic institutions, our business community, violence interrupters, researchers educators, coaches, counselors is going to take all of us. Not one of us can sit down in order to make a better, stronger, safer Chicago. Counting on the entire city to deliver on this.

So you all know we have no time to spare. As I speak, a group of philanthropic and business leaders are partnering to increase the resource for community youth programming. Between when school lets out and the Chicago Park District programs begin and to provide more safe opportunities for young people during Memorial Day weekend and the 4th of July. It's not just up to Fred Waller and his officers.

It is up to all of us. So, Charles, Abby and Andrea, thank you. Let's keep pushing to build a safer Chicago. And speaking of the right thing to do, the soul of Chicago tells us we will never close our doors to those who come here in search of a better life. For, as Scripture says, I was hungry and you gave me something to eat.

I thirsty and you gave me something to drink. I was a stranger. And you invited me in. I needed clothes. And you clothed. I was sick. And you looked after me. I was in prison. And you came to visit me. That has always been the soul of Chicago. And it will always be the soul of Chicago. We know the strength of a city is determined by how we treat the most vulnerable.

And so we choose to be a strong city. We must reject a zero sum formulation between investing and those who have been here for decades and supporting those who have been sit here on a bus. Even this morning. We can do both Chicago grow and we can all thrive together. I stand before you today deeply optimistic about the future, not because I'm ignorant of the challenges, but because I'm deeply aware of our history.

From the great Chicago to the Red Summer of 2019 to the 1968 riots to now the aftermath of pandemic and unrest. Our city has faced enormous challenges before, and every challenge has also been hidden within that tremendous opportunity, as history has shown us, that when we come together, we show up with the belief of what unites us and how powerful our differences are.

And the differences are what makes us the amazing city that we are. There is no limit Chicago to what we can achieve when we do it together. And we can and we will deliver for every single person in the city of Chicago. I say this today with a deep belief and conviction that our best and brighter days are ahead of us.

We can lead Chicago to a new era. Together, we can build a better, stronger, safer Chicago. We just have to look deep into the soul of Chicago. Can I get a witness? As Reverend Meeks said. Are you with me or am by myself? I'm talking about the soul of Chicago. Whether you live in Jefferson Park or Morgan Park or McKinley Park or Gage Park or in Humboldt Park.

I'm talking about a revival in the City of Chicago, where the soul of Chicago comes alive. A brand new Chicago is in front of us. I can wait to continue to lead this city towards a future that generations to come will look back and see the soul of Chicago that has made it possible for posterity. Thank you all.

My name is Brandon Johnson and I am the 57th Mayor of the City of Chicago.