



**Remarks by Mayor Michael B. Hancock
Tribute to Mayors Series**

January 21, 2016

Michael Hancock: Wow. First of all, let me thank all of you for this honor. Let me thank my good friend Mickey, who I met very early on in this journey, who expressed to me the importance of being who I am and to remind me to be inclusive of everyone. So, Mickey, you are one of my heroes and I thank you for this honor.

When Mickey called me and told me he want to honor me this year, I asked him, "Are you sure that you meant Michael Hancock? I just want to make sure you didn't misdial." But it's a real honor, Mickey, to receive this award at your event. An event that I have been to every year since I've been mayor. I have always enjoyed the significance and the symbolic message behind this event.

To my good friend Antonio Villaraigosa, who indeed did visit me shortly after election, the first mayor to come see me and walk into a hotel in my city as the newly elected mayor. To see the mayor of Los Angeles, the President of U.S. Conference

of Mayors and I was patted down. They said arms up. Patted down my details. Like what the hell are you all doing, this is the mayor. They asked them to put their arms up.

That moment that he and I sat to have dinner in Denver was a very special moment because I knew who he was and was honored to be in his presence. But he was there to tell me -- and this is what he said to me, "No matter what you go through, I got you. You call me no matter what you need." And he has been there. There have been a couple of issues I constantly think about this. He's given me his qualified advice and I'm appreciative. He's a beautiful human being. I truly believe that he will be the next governor of California and I'm excited about that. I'm excited about that.

Mayor Webb had to leave but I want to in his absence just acknowledge him and thank him for his tremendous leadership and mentoring as well. You don't get to these posts without many people recognizing you're not too heavy to lift. There was Mickey and the Latino Leaders network, or Antonio Villaraigosa, or Wellington Webb. A lot of people lift me on their shoulders. I'm grateful for their support and leadership and I want to thank them for that.

I'm in this room with a lot of folks from Colorado. Those of who are not from Colorado but happen to wear orange ties or whatever outfit, thank you. You've encouraged us. Go Broncos

no doubt. We're excited. But I thank you. Cardinals are here, yes, yes. The North Carolinians who are here as well, we thank you.

But let me acknowledge the folks who are here from my administration who joined me in this journey. First I want you to know I'm proud to appoint this guy who has one of the brightest political minds I know. And he's a member of my team. He became the youngest city attorney in Denver's history when I appointed him. I tell you I lean on him as much as I can. He is someone that I'm honored to serve with. He's our city attorney. The Chief City Attorney of the City and County of Denver Scott Martinez over here.

I'm also joined by my legislative director who handles my federal and state policies and make sure we get what we need. That will be Emily Hauber who's over here. And of course you got to have that guy who's with you at all times; keeps you out of trouble; make sure you have gum, mints, tic-tacs, a napkin for your eyebrows or brow. Whatever. But he's also the guy who just simply keeps me in line and make sure that I am of mayor caliber. He's my executive assistant. He's back there taking pictures. That would be Barry Burch who's in the back there.

And to all the mayors who are in the room, I am honored to be in your presence and to receive this award. Because I've been here when other mayors had received it. It's an honor to

be acknowledged by this venerable organization. I know what it means to be a mayor, of course, and the challenges and burdens that we take on every day. I just want you to know that every time I meet a mayor or I celebrate a mayor, I salute you because I know what you take home every night.

In this room, if I'm allowed, I want to just acknowledge one particular mayor. One of my counterparts in Colorado. He is a newly elected mayor for Colorado Springs. That would be John Suthers. Is he still here? Where is he? There he is. My man, John Suthers.

Let me just say this before I just launch to a very brief comment. I'm amused by the snow issue here in D.C. They are from Colorado. So I have my best friend in the world, Peter Groff, who was the president of the Colorado State Senate. He's here. He lives here in D.C. now. He was part of the inaugural of Obama administration. He texted me today and he says I just want you to know my kids are home today. I said, Peter, we're not that far apart in age. We grew up in Denver together. We get what it took in Denver for them to send us home or keep us from school. He says, and by the way, they already are home for tomorrow. And I said but, Peter, not one flake has fallen. He says I know and that's why I'm telling you this city is jacked up.

Now I have nothing against Mayor Muriel Bowser. I love him to death and our D.C. folks. But we in Denver, those of us who grew up prior to 2000, we understand the process called knee high. Which meant it had to be at least a knee high of snow before they send you home or said you can't come to school. We also know what that meant. You walk in through the snow. I remember walking in two feet of snow to get to school. They did not cancel school. So the fact that not a flake has fallen and they have canceled school here in D.C. has told me how far this policy has changed throughout this country with regards to snow. But here we are, every one of us, trying to get the hell out of D.C. before one flake has fallen. Let me hasten so folks can go catch their flight.

It's not lost on me that on Monday we celebrated the holiday and birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King. A man of selfless sacrifice and a man who kept community first. The real essence and power of what makes a great man, selfless sacrifice and community first at all times. I don't know if you know or not, but Dr. King and Cesar Chavez were good friends. But they never met face to face. They only communicated by telephone. Cesar Chavez, while fasting for his farm workers, received a telegram from Martin Luther King just a few weeks before Dr. King was assassinated. And Dr. King said in his telegraph to his good friend Cesar Chavez:

As brothers in the fight for equality, I extend a hand of fellowship and goodwill and wish continuing success to you and your members. You and your valued workers have demonstrated your commitment to righting grievances and wrongs forced upon you and forced upon great people. We are together with you in spirit and in determination that our dreams for a better tomorrow will be realized.

Dr. King and Cesar realized that their hopes and dreams for our nation were similar. Dr. King recognized that Cesar Chavez was inspired by the civil rights movement and the work of Dr. King was doing. In fact, his same movement in California mirrored the same values of non-violence and boycotts that Dr. King had inspired all over the nation. Cesar Chavez once said about the monument to tribute Dr. King on the National Mall: This monument on the National Mall doesn't just honor a great civil rights leader. It helps tell the story of America for all Americans.

The reality is that Dr. King and Cesar Chavez realize this, just as every mayor around this country realizes, all men are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality and tied in a simple garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly. Dr. King went on to say I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be and you can never be what you ought to be until I am what I ought to be.

The reality is, as mayor, we recognize that we represent everyone. Mutuality that drives my vision as mayor drives the vision of most mayors in this room. Most good mayors who cannot be boxed into favoring one side or the other even in times of Black Lives Matter, even in times of concern about police community relations. We recognize that the most effective position is one a convener and one a leader who may personally have a sense of passion one way or the other but recognizing that I stand for all people. Yes - black, brown, white, red, and yellow; Christian and, yes, Muslim; Jew and, yes, Hindu. We are mayors for all people in the cities. That's why it's important for me and for my cabinet to reflect my community.

The three people I introduced tonight you see are diverse and represent different segments of our community. That's why it's important that a mayor stand for mutuality. I can't be who I ought to be until you can be who you ought to be and you can't be who you ought to be until I can be who I ought to be. That's why I ran on demand for Mayor Villaraigosa that every child in Denver matters no matter where they live or what zip code they fall on. They deserve a right to a quality education in their neighborhood. Every child in Denver, they have a right. And Cesar Chavez and Dr. King believe that they have a right to exercise their dreams.

An inalienable right to dream, lead, and to succeed.

That's why I supported pathways to citizenship. Don't believe in breaking up families. Make sure we do what's necessary to keep families together in this nation. And that's why, when it came time for us to review our MWBE policy in Denver and the diversity study came back - and it has always come back - that we have a deficit, I extended the audits because I was never satisfied with doing the status quo and challenging my team to think deeper and dig deeper. Find policies and practices that raise up small businesses, raise up women businesses, raise up minority businesses and give them an opportunity in our city.

That's why through executive order I not only required us to try new protégé mentee type programs. But I required companies, particularly majority companies, to prove to us in the City of Denver what you do to include women in minority businesses outside of pursuing public contracts. I want to know what you do when you're doing private contracts before you're awarded projects or contracts in the City and County of Denver.

I can't be what I ought to be until you can be what you ought to be. That's why in this conversation about race and police and community relations I went out about my city sitting with groups in auditoriums, and cafeterias, and libraries. I would sit in public housing kitchens. I would sit then with the Latino community and the Asian community GLBT taskforce and

commissions. I want to understand the barriers to why we are having such a difficult time not only in Denver but throughout this nation. What people recognize and have said to me very clearly we are human beings first. Don't call me Latino, call me an American. Don't call me African American, call me an American.

Recognize that there biases on the law enforcement side and that there are indeed biases in our community. Until we can address those two biases, we will always be on the brink of teetering toward chaos and violence. Leadership is needed. Well, Mayor Villaraigosa or Governor Villaraigosa, Mayor Hancock, Mayor Bieter, wherever we are in this nation, as Mayor Landrieu said yesterday, run to the fire and lead mayors. Lead. Indeed we are the only ones who can on this issue.

Then finally let me say this. That when gang violence spiked in my city, I recognized it was primarily black and brown youths who were dying on our streets, who were pointing guns at each other. Not only that we summon law enforcement, but I'm glad that as an African American mayor and as a Latino city attorney we looked at each other and said the issue is deeper than just law enforcement.

We need to convene those who are dealing with the issues of housing; those who are dealing with the issue of job training, human services, and children affairs. Our approach must be much

deeper than just preparing to lock up the young men on our streets.

That's why it's important that we're willing to elect mayors who reflect members of the community, who not only look like them but carry the values of a diverse community. And that's why inclusiveness is so important. Those who recognize I can't be who I ought to be until you can be who you ought to be; who understand the theories and values of mutuality.

So tonight, as we prepare this nation to address the issues of who the next president of the United States will be, I challenge every one of us as I accept this award from the Latino Leaders Network to think hard about that candidate who is espousing the values that you espouse; who recognize that my destination is mutually tied to their values and their destination; who recognize that they can't be who they ought to be until you can be who you ought to be; who recognize that they're willing to stand up and be accountable and not necessarily ready to take one side or the other but to recognize that they will represent every American and even Muslims, Christians, Jews and all the other faiths, white, black, Latino, American, Indian.

We've come too far from where we started and we're too close to where we're going to allow some idiot to turn us back now. So my hope is, as I accept this award, that you all will

join me to recognize that just because an idiot does what an idiot will do doesn't mean everybody who looks like that idiot acts like that idiot too. And I want to close on this.

I got to recognize that in this room is the HUD administrator from Colorado, Rick Garcia, who flew all the way to D.C. for this dinner. I want to thank you, Rick. Rick and I served in the city council together and he'll understand when I say this:

On behalf of the 11,000 city employees of Denver and the 670,000 people we serve every day, this award I accept on their behalf because without them I would not be standing here. Without the sacrifices and the blood that was shed for me to arrive at this occasion, to be judged by the content of my character and not by the color of my skin, the work of Cesar Chavez and the work of Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and all of their contemporaries who paid the price for me to be here, I can accept the award named after Antonio Villaraigosa. Thank you.