

Mayor Monroe Nichols

2024 Inauguration Address - Dec. 2, 2024

To Mayor Randle, Mayor Savage, Mayor LaFortune, Mayor Taylor, Mayor Bartlett, Mayor Bynum; Mr. Auditor, members of the City Council, members of the municipal court, Tribal leaders, honored guests and my fellow Tulsans.

I stand here humbled by the faith you have put in me and resolved to fully meet every task that will face this new administration.

I congratulate the soon to be sworn in members of the City Council and our City Auditor. Together, I look forward to building a culture of city government that citizens can see and feel. A culture that listens to citizens and invests in what works.

A more efficient government that is defined as an excellent place to work for the 3,500 employees, serving a city that is the best place in the country to live. I'm so proud to know each of you and excited to take on the work ahead.

Eight years ago, a young city councilor challenged Tulsa to have high expectations as he took office as Tulsa's 40th mayor - today as he leaves office, because of his service - our city has momentum and is poised for greatness.

I thank Mayor Bynum for his service to our city and the graciousness he has shown me during this transition.

I stand here also grateful to my family, so many of whom have traveled to be here today. To my mom, thank you for paving my pathway that has led us to this moment. To Gavin, thank you for giving me purpose - there are no words to fully describe what you mean to me - so I'll just say I love you buddy.

In Galatians chapter 6, verse 9 we find the words: "Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up."

At 6 years old, Lessie Benningfield Randle, was forced to leave her community as the Tulsa Race Massacre changed her life forever. At 110 years old, Mother Randle - one of only two survivors, has not become weary, but has instead built a legacy.

She was witness to the darkest moment in our city's history and today, over 103 years later - she is here to witness the inauguration of Tulsa's first black mayor.

Mother Randle for what you have endured, the mantle you continue to carry, for your grace - as mayor, I say thank you.

Thirty-eight Tulsans have taken the mayoral oath of office leading forty different administrations - with our first mayor taking office before Oklahoma was even a state. Over the years, mayors have served in office during times of great hope and prosperity; and times of peril.

As I take on the task of serving our city I do so with humility and respect for the 38 who have come before me and with a commitment to make this city the safest, most vibrant city in America with economic opportunity for everyone.

Tulsa is an amazing city that has always set the standard for innovation and progress. From our incorporation in 1898, the discovery of oil in Red Fork, becoming the oil capital of the world, the center of black wealth and the building of one of America's most beautiful cities. Our community boasts a top 100 university, world-class museums, wonderful neighborhoods that serve as the backbone of our city and we are a growing giant in entrepreneurship - all things that provide the foundations of greatness.

Just as we have so much to celebrate, our history and our presence are not absent trials and challenges. A city history that begins with the legacy of Indian removal from the southeast, a race massacre that left 300 dead and 37 blocks flattened - a community that today struggles with the stubborn challenges of homelessness, economic inequality, the availability of affordable housing, shortcomings in our collective ability to meet the needs of our students in schools and safety in our neighborhoods.

Some of our challenges may be new; what it will take to meet them might also be unfamiliar and at times uncomfortable, but the values of hard work, honesty, tolerance, curiosity, perseverance and hope that it will take to dispose of them are baked into our DNA as Tulsans.

Progress will not come easy or in a short amount of time, but we do not shrink from any one of these problems and we will meet them.

Let this moment serve as a reminder: while our work starts today, it is far from done. The road ahead requires courage, collaboration, and an unwavering commitment to each other.

For over a year on the campaign trail, I talked about a bold, clear vision for Tulsa. This vision is the cornerstone of my administration as we work to make Tulsa the greatest city in America. Together, we will focus on:

- Ending homelessness
- Increasing affordable housing
- Making Tulsa the safest big city in America
- Improving student outcomes
- Expanding economic opportunity
- And co-governing with our tribal nations

Ending Homelessness

First, we must confront the crisis of homelessness. Our numbers are up 22.5% since 2023.

Homelessness is a complex challenge. In the coming weeks, we will be launching a new comprehensive effort underscoring the largest expansion in public homelessness services in our city's history with a goal of achieving functional zero homelessness by 2030.

We will take immediate action to meet the public safety needs downtown and begin our effort to decommission encampments across the city - we will lead with compassion for those living on the street while being aggressive in cleaning up our city.

Increasing Housing

Among our homeless population are 3,000 individuals who currently sit on the waitlist for housing assistance. This number, matched with the fact that 46% of Tulsans are cost-burdened by housing expenses, underscores a need to act to address the affordable housing shortage in our city.

As we face the reality that thousands of our neighbors are living without the dignity of a consistent roof over their heads, we must realize that this is not just a housing issue—it is a moral issue.

We will work tirelessly to ensure that every person in Tulsa has access to safe, affordable housing, always championing housing as a human right - our goal is 6,000 new affordable units by 2028 and the clock to get there starts right now.

Public Safety

As I said this on the campaign trail, Tulsa can be the safest big city in America. I am incredibly grateful for the men and women who serve our city in the fire and police departments, and I know that together, we can deliver on the promise of safety for all citizens.

But we must redefine what public safety means for our city. Safety is not just the absence of crime—it is the presence of trust and opportunity in every neighborhood and at every level - not just from a fire protection, medical response, or law enforcement standpoint. It's about strengthening relationships, creating a more accountable government, and ensuring neighborhoods are places where residents can thrive.

We will rid our streets of the most violent, repeat criminals among us - but the real work of eradicating crime will be our investment in the communities where opportunities seem few and far between.

Investing in Our Children and Education

Of all the issues we face, nothing is more important than investing in our children's future. Academic success is the foundation upon which opportunity is built, and every child in this city deserves access to a high-quality education.

Soon, we will launch the Office of Children, Youth and Families and begin our work - taking a Cradle to Career approach, in collaboration with schools and community partners, to close achievement gaps and boost outcomes for all children. We will support students and teachers - doing our part in giving them the tools and resources they need to succeed.

Our children are our greatest asset - when we invest in them, we invest in the future of our city. It's far past time we made transformational investments to put children living in poverty on a pathway to economic mobility. We owe it to them and we owe it to ourselves.

Expand Economic Opportunity

As we look ahead to building a city of greater opportunity, we must keep in mind that economic inequality threatens our vitality. One in four Tulsans live in poverty, a number that is as high as one in three in North Tulsa.

Over the next four years, we will prioritize investing in all parts of our city so that everyone has an equal shot. As we seek to do this, we will focus on workforce development and infrastructure; champion our local businesses and invest in entrepreneurship; cut red tape at city hall to drive down the cost of doing business in the city and work to attract diverse industries that can create stable, high-paying jobs.

Winning the next decade means a broad expansion of economic opportunity and we will deliver on this commitment to Tulsans.

Co-Governing with Tribal Nations

Before Tulsa was Tulsa, it was Indian Country - 188 years later, as Tulsa sits on the reservation of three tribal nations, it remains Indian Country. I'm proud to have leaders from the Cherokee Nation, Muscogee Creek Nation, and Osage Nation here today - their contributions to our economy, culture, and identity are immeasurable.

While we have issues that will challenge us, this administration will always stand on the side of Tribal Sovereignty. Soon, I will appoint the City's first Director of Tribal Policy and Partnerships and I look forward to working with our tribal leaders and the citizens they represent on issues ranging from public safety and economic development, to education and housing - as well as making Tulsa the gateway to Indian Country, known not only for our origins at the Council Oak Tree, but for the great promise of the future we are going to build.

The Road Ahead

As the transition continues, we will solicit input from citizens with roundtable discussions around town to ensure that a campaign run on opening the door to City

Hall turns into an administration committed to doing just that - as we meet these challenges facing Tulsa, we will be a government that listens to the people it serves.

Today starts a new day for Tulsa where we will come to terms with our past, while aggressively working to secure a brighter future for each citizen. We are a diverse city, but we are one city - make no mistake - the only pathway to progress is one that we travel together.

A Vision for the Future

Imagine the city we can build together:

- A city where we end homelessness, making it rare, brief, and non-recurring
- A city where every family has a home they can afford
- A city that is the safest in the country and where every neighborhood is thriving
- A city where every child is poised for success through education
- A city that prioritizes economic development in every part of our city
- And a city primed to win the next decade and beyond

That is the city I believe in. And that is the city we will create together.

I know the road ahead will take work, and there will be setbacks and challenges. But I also know the people of Tulsa are strong, determined, and unwavering in their commitment to make this city the best it can be.

Let us face this moment with courage and compassion and prove to ourselves and to the world that Tulsa's brightest days are ahead.

Thank you for your trust and partnership. Our work to build a strong, prosperous and united city takes all of us. And it starts today!

God bless each one of you and God bless America's greatest city, Tulsa, Oklahoma.