Second Inaugural Address  
Mayor Eric Garcetti  
July 1, 2017

The natural world marks the passage of time with the rise of the sun and the turn of the seasons. On top of that natural world sits the human world of the city and our democracy. That world makes its own clocks and its own calendars. Elections that mark and limit time. Terms of office that wind the watch of the days we make together.

Most days of most weeks, we toil away inside this hall behind me. We count our progress in tallied votes and measured gains. We mark our plans by the week and the month.

But the gardener takes a longer view at the start of the year than in the days of the harvest, so today let us too set our eyes on a farther horizon.

Today, we stand outside the hall. We can see a good deal more. We can see our city.

The tower above us bears the words of thinkers who walked their city streets a long time before we gathered here on ours. So today, let us imagine farther into the future.

The sun over our gathering shines its light on a tapestry whose colors we still have to count. So today, let us take them all in.

In the time that Los Angeles has been a city — in the state of California, in the United States of America — forty-two mayors have marked eighty-one terms of office. Four years ago, we stood here on a sweltering day to witness such a changing of the guard. I had not come to a new place, but you had entrusted me
with a new role. I swore a humble oath to serve. To listen, to lead.

Four years ago this tower stood just as tall but this city did not. We were crawling out from the shadow of an economic downturn that left our basic city services gutted, our morale sapped, and our aspirations tempered.

But we refused to be modest that day.

We refused to be divided that day.

That day, we shared a vision that we could renew our faith in this City Hall together. We said we would guide our economy into recovery. And I swore that we would put that recovery to work for all of us.

I asked for your patience and your faith that we would knit back together the bones of our city. That we would fix our broken streets and failing sewers. That we would modernize our obsolete networks and aging ways. That we would judge our success by the promotion of the good life, rather than by the promotion of our bureaucracy.

We got things done. The city is changing.

It hasn’t happened overnight, but it is happening, as slowly and surely, the light gets in.

We changed the culture of City Hall. We got back to work, one street tree, one sidewalk, one pothole at a time.

And we changed the culture in City Hall. For the first time, three citywide elected officials and fifteen councilmembers set aside the stale, unending competition for the day’s headlines. Instead, we sought out the levers where the powers of each of us, exercised with prudence and passion, could double the efforts of the others — all in the service of a freer, safer, prouder city.
We found that by working together, we could do more to write — and mend — our laws and to care for our neighborhoods than ever before. With that spirit, we promoted the health of our entire region, as we gave our attention to every block.

When we let slide that zero-sum race for credit, we won a bounty of shared progress. Today, our children and their neighborhoods have two Promise Zones and record graduation rates. Today, we see our aerospace and entertainment industries revive and ripple out through our economy, easing neighborhoods and families off of fear’s edge and into shared hope.

You, the voters, passed one of the largest initiatives to help the homeless, and, before two seasons turned, you did it again. You invested in Measure M, the most ambitious municipal initiative in this country by a railroad mile. Today, we look upon a city with more potential, more ambition, and more unity than we looked out on four years ago.

And it’s a damn good thing, because now it’s time to draw on every drop of that potential, every bit of that ambition, every fiber of that unity.

Crime remains a challenge. So does moving through our city. Even as we rise to face it, homelessness rises faster, every tent and blanket calling on our deepest reserves of courage, creativity, and compassion. Behind that harrowing scene on our streets, our housing crisis grows. Climbing rents warn us of a city without a middle, the rich and the poor drifting apart as if split by an earthquake whose early warnings could not have been any louder.

We refuse to be caught flat-footed. It’s not who we are as Angelenos.

For more than two centuries, this place — these streets, this land, these hills, this sky — has welcomed our boldest plans. Every Angeleno generation has stood here before us to rise up against the bonds that narrowed their ambitions.

They came by land bridge. They came by wagon carts. They left behind slavery’s chains and the ache of famine. They took a weeklong journey by schooner from
San Francisco, and then an all-day dusty cart ride up from San Pedro Bay. And they stood here, on Calle Primavera — Spring Street. They could survey the whole of their pueblo, and they knew that their story was not finished.

They built the railroad. They dredged the port. They brought water from the mountains, they laid the tracks of the streetcars. After the Second World War, they housed a small city of homeless veterans encamped in Westlake Park. They built the freeways. They raised a skyline that continues to grow today.

You see, the work of a city is not the same as the work of a nation. The nation, first and last, is a dream to bind a vast unruly land. First and last, the city is one physical place. Built strong enough, it will bring to fruition a great many of our dreams.

The work of solving our problems is the work of building our city. And Los Angeles — we are builders. We have begun that work, and we mean to keep at it.

A holiday visitor who leaves town tomorrow and returns the next time we gather to change the hands of government, will arrive at a city transformed. She’ll take the Metro line from the airport up the Crenshaw Line and into the heart of town.

She’ll see a modernized Convention Center … She’ll cross a brand new 6th Street Bridge over a revitalized river … She’ll see the Lucas Museum — one of the greatest museum gifts in the history of this country.

And what she doesn’t see will be just as real: what lies between the monuments and inside our neighborhoods.

Our guest will land in a city that produces affordable housing at twice the rate we do it today … She’ll breathe cleaner air, drink water taken from land just beneath her feet. She’ll pass by parks and schools where kids play sports without worrying what uniforms cost their families, as Los Angeles becomes the healthiest city in America … She’ll catch glimpses of biotech campuses racing forward, toward cures for diseases once thought incurable.
She might miss that the minimum wage will have risen to fifteen dollars an hour, that the first two years of college are free, that every young man or woman who wants a summer job has one. And she might not know that she herself is one of a record fifty million annual visitors, a number that powers our industries and strengthens our middle class.

Our traveler may not see all the changes, but she will feel them as she walks through a city with more dignity and more pride than we even know today.

And yet those plans — of the museum, of the bridge, of the summer jobs and the higher wages — are all drawn up. Their vistas lie in sight from where we stand today.

What chapter will we write tomorrow?

The page is not blank. This city has already begun to write that chapter. You started writing it when you said yes, in record numbers, to building homes for our homeless. You started writing it when you said yes, in record numbers, to stretching our Metro across the county. You started writing it when you said yes to calling forth a city reborn.

If democracy makes its own time, then the local elections of last November and this March rang chimes for a new age. An age demanding that we listen, and an age demanding that we lead. An age announcing a growing, a vital and, most of all, a reconnected city.

We spent four years going back to the basics because we owed it to ourselves and to our future. We spent four years going back to the basics so that tomorrow we could build on those basics. We could build the future out of the pieces we have in front of us. So we could connect this city, its people, and our future.

We fought for the Lucas Museum not just to win the biggest cultural prize in the nation, but to unlock the imagination of generations of young Angelenos, and to inspire us to finally return arts education to all of our schools.
We fight for the Olympics not just to watch its torch blaze a third trail through our city, but because we know that torch will call our children out of their homes and into our parks and our playfields. We know that universal access to sports will make Los Angeles the healthiest city in America. We know that playing a sport may make the difference between a dropout form and a diploma in our children’s hands.

We fought to pass Measure M, not just because we are all stuck in traffic, but because we want the working men and women who lay those tracks and dig those tunnels to map the route to a healthy, vibrant middle class.

We fight to get the tents packed up from the underpass not just to clean up our streets or remove them from our sight but because we want every unhoused Angeleno to have a home where they are healthy and safe and where they can begin to pursue their dreams. And if that means new laws or reforming the laws that we have so we can build the homes this city needs, let us start that work today.

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If you were born here, if you were drawn here, if you came from down the block or across the sea, I want you to have a stake in this city. To sign the papers on your first home. To know the joy of scratching every inch your children grow into the paint on the kitchen doorway. And to know that in their time, that your children — because of our work — will be able to make this city their home, too.

Look around. The people, wealth, the will, the space is laid out in front of us and the time is now. The future always comes early to Los Angeles. Walk a block and take a train to the launching pad of a voyage to Mars or the port of call for renewed undersea exploration. Go to Hollywood and be present at the creation of the greatest stories in the universe, whether they’re projected on a screen or they immerse you in their reality.

We know, we’ve known, the future is already here. In the words of writer William Gibson, “it’s just unevenly distributed.” That’s on us. We must decide whether our
whole city will own its share of that future, or whether we will watch it pass us by while our greater number watches from behind a glass. We decide, here, now, and walking forward, whether that future will be offered to one in a million with a lottery ticket, or whether every child growing up here will know it is her birthright.

We must connect. We must succeed — at sustaining middle class jobs, strengthening our schools, at protecting our environment while growing our economy — because right now, it’s on us to show the way forward.

You see, we are a united city in a divided country. A country that for centuries has stood for something. It has stood for freedom, stood for leadership, for bold plans and great accomplishments. And now, at this hour, we see our nation and its leaders shrink from those values we once proclaimed.

So Los Angeles — port of call, sanctuary, home of invention, most American of cities — must pick up these most American of ideas where they lie, and we must lead the world for those who need it.

And who better but you, us — this impossible city in this improbable place. This city, with its shaking bedrock and its downtown planted miles from its coast. This city that wasn’t supposed to happen, the railroad’s afterthought, dredging its port, drawing its water.

Today, we hear our nation’s leaders tell us that cities like this should not work — that we should fear the immigrant, but watch us thrive in our great diversity. They tell us cities like this shed jobs when they protect the environment, but watch our working people rise as we clean our air.

We stand as a city that respects each other. That protects each other. And here, we carry forward the legacies of Abraham Lincoln and Martin Luther King. Of Emma Lazarus and Cesar Chavez. Of John Muir and Rachel Carson.

They call upon us to protect this land, this air, this sea, this planet and our people. And we are ready to answer that call. We are embracing our leadership in the
world and giving our attention to every city block.

There is no line to be drawn between fixing the cracks in the pavement and lifting our heads to the sky. They’re one and the same

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There is not a night I go to sleep without thinking of the hopes and dreams of four million souls with whom I share this city. And there is not a day I wake without thinking of you — my four million neighbors. Of the natives and of the new arrivals. Of my brothers and sisters sleeping in a tent down the street, and my friends and neighbors hoping that tomorrow they’ll hold on to what they’ve got in Wilmington or Panorama City.

I think of children riding bicycles through the streets of Koreatown or the hills of El Sereno, down the blocks of South L.A. or the ones that I grew up on in the San Fernando Valley — at a moment when this world tells too many of them, too soon, that what it has in store for them is boundaries and limitations. So I go to sleep with a prayer and a plan that tomorrow, with our courage and conviction, together we will build a city that throws open every door ever shut on a hope or a dream.

I stand here today on the strength of your faith in my work … of your vote for that work. Thank you for the opportunity to serve.

You granted me one set of seasons to start that work. And together we poured an unshakable foundation. You honored me with another turn of seasons to continue that work. In the time we have, I promise we will not let that foundation sit bare.

I promise: we will build on it. A united and connected city.

A united city, with eyes set as high as the mountains, with our gaze turned toward the Pacific horizon.

A connected city, with our bonds so strong that as we climb, we let none among us
fall.

We may not get there overnight, but we will get there one day — and as we go, we’ll shine our beacon from the highest tower in this city. In Los Angeles, we may be an imperfect paradise but we are still there for every seeker of tolerance, every immigrant fleeing war, every native and new arrival who will put her shoulder to the wheel and help perfect this paradise and this land.

There are many names that I carry proudly:

Husband, father, son.

American, Californian.

Mayor.

But there’s no name I wear quite like Angeleno.

Our future and our world’s future will be written here.

Our time is now. Let’s go and write it.

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