

**Adrienne Parkmond**  
**Mayor for the Day Speech**  
**February 18, 2015**

Good morning Mayor O'Leary, State Representative Butler, Police Chief Riddick, Fire Chief Martin, Dr. Ouellette, Local Elected Officials, Members of the African American for a Day Committee, dignitaries, family friends and constituents of this great City of Waterbury.

I am honored and humbled by my selection as African American Mayor for a Day. It is indeed a recognition that I do not take lightly and will hold in high regard, particularly since this acclaim is bestowed upon me by the community which raised me and whom I have tried to give back to.

I am grateful that my mother, Alice Dean, is here to see me accept this honor. My reason for being here is clearly a testament to the example she set and for that I am proud. Unfortunately my dad passed away a few years ago. Although he is not here in body, I know his spirit is present and I am sure he is looking down with great pride and for those of you that knew him, I am sure there is a smile on his face.

My children are also not present this morning but for good reason. My daughter Sydney, who is in her 1<sup>st</sup> year of law school, had an exam this morning so I excused her from attending, but she will be at this evening's event. My son, Xavier, is in Washington DC finishing up his final semester at George Washington University. He is a catcher on the baseball team there. I just want to acknowledge the Police Athletic League who my son played baseball for starting when he was six years old. He learned the fundamentals of the game and of teamwork from PAL and because of that he received a baseball scholarship. So thank you!

On a side note, when I told my son of this award, he asked the usual questions of "What does it mean?", "What do you get to do?" So I began to explain and I mentioned I would have the opportunity to sit in the Mayor of Waterbury's office. As a White House intern for this semester, he giggled and said "That's nice mom. You sit in the Mayor's office, I'll be the Eisenhower Executive Office Building, you know the one next to the West Wing of the White House?" Now we all want our children to trump us in life, but this might not have been the best time for him to mention it!

So once again thank you. I never expect to be recognized for doing what I believe is a part of my calling, a part of my being, my personal legacy. And what I know for sure is the reason I am here today is because of those that came before me. To be placed in the category of the many African American trailblazers and pioneers of this community is humbling. I have long admired the many individuals share this honor. My mentors, the late Kay Wyrick and the late Patricia Mayfield both were true women of substance and conviction and embodied the word service, especially to the Waterbury community. The heavy lifting done by them and so many others paved the way for me to stand here in front of you. I just hope that I can be that source of strength of spirit that propels the next generation into action and service. I accept this honor with the understanding that with it comes responsibility. The responsibility of continued service and commitment to do my part in prepare the future Mayors.

When many ask what I actually do for a living, what my job is, I usually take the time to give the elevator speech. I talk about the programs my agency provides to help those in need, I talk about my teaching and I talk about my community service, in Waterbury and throughout the state. One day when describing this to someone, their response is something that stopped me, gave me great pause and became one of my life's Ah Ha! moments. This person after listening to my list of life activities, said, "Oh, your calling is service." I never had my life defined by what I do for others (except in the role of Mom in Chief). As I sat with that assessment of my life, I began to realize that being of service to others is in my DNA.

My parents have always emulated the true meaning of service. We surely did not have a lot when I grew up but they gave me what they could. I recall my mother making sandwiches for the many children in our North End neighborhood that often were hungry when I was young. There is something about her, in her being that would not let a child go hungry. I remember my father giving people rides, fixing cars and helping neighbors and friends. My parents had faith and believed wholeheartedly that you reap what you sow. Although resources were not plentiful, there was always enough to share with others.

I believe that service is innately in all of our DNA; it's just a matter of if we are willing to own it. We all give to causes, we all are a part of a board, a civic and/or fraternal organization, all with the goal of service to the community. The question is always, are we willing to own, acknowledge, and embrace our God given gift of service and put it in motion for the greater good. Service can take many forms and can be as simple as lending a hand to someone in need.

I am blessed to have a career that provides me the opportunity to help those in need on a daily basis. Those folks that are in need of the very thing that defines many of us...a job. A means of taking care of and providing for our families.

Waterbury has its challenges as many urban area do. Those in Waterbury that feel the brunt of its challenges are no different than folks in other areas of the state who experience the same issues. As human beings we all long for the same thing, to belong, to feel heard, to be seen and to have the hope. Many times this comes from employment. The greatest pain in life is to be invisible, to feel alone and to believe that you do not matter. That's the feeling of so many individuals I work with on a daily basis. I listen, give people the opportunity to share their stories and by doing so it gives them the opportunity to know they are not alone, they begin to see themselves in others and for a moment regain hope, for a moment begin to see a glimpse of the power to change their lives and the power to triumph. I get the distinct opportunity to help these individuals move forward in their lives and make positive changes. I try to do this not only in my work but in my work in the community. So my friends, the work we do, the service we provide can be transformative in someone's life and at the same time be transformative in your life. So take the time to make a difference.

Last night I received an email from a Waterbury participant in the Platform to Employment program highlighted in Sunday's newspaper. The participant sent me an email to say Congratulations for my selection and to thank me for the program that changed her life. She was out of work for over 2 years and had lost hope of ever returning to the workforce. The best part is she signed it with her name and under it Platform to Employment – Cohort 2 – graduated and employed!

So how do we, as a community continue to move forward to make differences in the lives of residents in this great City of Waterbury? How do we as a community shift the dialogue for future generations? How do we restore hope and eradicate apathy?

In many ways, it seems that we continue to have this conversation. Maybe the reason we continue to have this conversation is because we are too busy talking about it rather than being about it. Changing the dialogue or the by-line of our story is about committing to education and service. So let's Change the Dialogue of this City ....

***Change the dialogue*** by .... Educating our young people on all that's great about the contributions, and sacrifice of others that happened for their sake. This is critical. They must understand in order to have pride. We must teach them that our history is rich therefore there is no excuse for a poor attitude. They cannot be what they cannot see. Help them and others to understand that YOU must be the CHANGE you want to see.

***Change the dialogue*** by .... Helping each other, emulating positive behavior in the face of real or perceived opposition, oppression and inequality. This should not be interpreted as a weakness but as a way to elevate ourselves to see how to operate within a larger context. Talk TO each other not AT each other.

***Change the dialogue*** by .... Being deliberate in our everyday lives. Live with purpose. Find and define your personal legacy. Once you own it, you change your story and your impact on the community in which you live. Be an Active participant in your life and this community, not a passive recipient of trials and tribulations of the day. Too many of us, wait for life to happen to us. You know the story...As soon as the snow stops, I'll be able to do this; As soon as I hit Powerball I will be able to do that. Stop waiting for life to happen to you and left your life happen for you.

***Change the dialogue*** by....Educating yourself. Learn something new every day and when you learn, teach. When you get, give.

***Change the dialogue*** through service. We are all blessed to be here, it is our obligation to be of service to others and our community. In the words of Marian Wright Edelman. "Service is the rent we pay for the privilege of living on this earth." Believe it.

When we change our dialogue ladies and gentlemen we change our outcome, we change our future.

In my little "fifteen minutes of fame" I want you to remember my service, my tenure, my term in office as calling upon each and every one of you – to change the dialogue of our community; to commit to helping others, to honor our past by educating our future. That is what I want to be remembered for when asked about my service, my term in office... this call to action is a call for all of us and it cannot be just for one day.

Thank you and God Bless.