

I stand here today as a product of my ancestors—carrying their trauma, but also their perseverance and resilience. I give thanks to the 6,000 ancestors who endured unimaginable suffering and survived so that I could be here today. To them, I am forever grateful. Ase.

This morning, in this beautiful venue, you've heard poetry, music, and messages designed to stir the civic soul. We know you are here seeking inspiration—a spark to fuel your journey. But let me remind you, this isn't a race with a finish line. The work we do is ongoing. Now, more than ever, we need people like you—people who care not just for their own future, but for the future of our communities and country.

When Steve asked me to give the call to action for this Civic Saturday, themed *Strive On*, I immediately said yes. My life has been defined by striving—sometimes succeeding, sometimes failing—but always moving forward. I have seen people strive toward excellence and achieve it. I've also seen those who never stop trying, no matter their accomplishments, and others who shine brightly for a moment, only to burn out.

One memory that stands out is a trip I took to Ghana, West Africa. There, I witnessed people with little to nothing make the most of their circumstances, and in some cases, overcome overwhelming odds to become symbols of hope for

their communities. Long before written language, Africans used symbols to convey powerful messages of love, life, unity, and resilience.

When I think of striving, I think of the Adinkra symbol *Aya*, meaning endurance and resourcefulness—qualities essential for perseverance. The symbol is a fern leaf, one of the oldest and most resilient plants on the planet. I also think of the countless ancestors taken from their homes in Africa, who found the strength and resourcefulness to survive and contribute meaningfully to the growth of this nation.

Striving has two parts: the inward challenge to better ourselves and our circumstances, and the outward challenge to make our community a better place for the next generation. As we grow older and understand ourselves, we come to value time. We can either become comfortable with who we are or continually seek to grow in our understanding of humanity. Only with this understanding can we build a community where every voice is heard and the individual and collective needs are balanced.

Contrary to popular belief, such a community is possible.

But this community of inclusion requires the investments you are making today. By standing together to ensure every voice is heard, we can honor our ancestors and our civic responsibility. Of course, this won't come without sacrifice. Time

will take its toll, and those who only care about themselves will try at every turn to stop progress and roll back policies of inclusion. They may succeed temporarily, but their efforts are driven by fear—fear of change, fear of being excluded in a future world.

But I say this: fear is no match for the power of love. The love that tells us when enough is enough. Think of the love a mother shows when she tells her child “no,” even though the child doesn’t understand. That’s the kind of love we need for our country right now.

We need a love that tells us it’s time to stop ignoring our homelessness crisis. A love that refuses to accept a society where quality housing, healthcare, and a decent standard of living are out of reach for so many. We need the kind of love that looks beyond the bottom line and sees the human line.

No longer will we ignore the trauma that lives in our DNA. We will acknowledge it, seek healing, and ensure it is not passed on. Enough is enough.

No longer will we isolate members of our communities. We will invite everyone to be heard because we understand the power of diversity. Enough is enough.

No more will we sit on the sidelines, criticizing others. Instead, we will engage in our civic duties and strive for a robust democracy. Enough is enough.

We will remember that a world where everyone agrees is a world without freedom. We will accept our differences and strive to find common ground.

Enough is enough.

(Points to audience) Say it with me: Enough is enough.

No more focusing on what divides us. It's time to find what unites us. Enough is enough.

As you walk out of those doors leaving this place, I want you to remember the re-commitments you made today. I hope that we have reminded you of how important you are and have inspired you moving forward. Now is the time to take that inspiration and turn it into action. Now is the time to Strive On!