

MAYOR'S CORNER



A BLOG BY MAYOR JAMES D. STEWART, JR.

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THE SECOND OF JULY A MAYOR'S MOMENT FROM PHILADELPHIA



Remember the days of old; consider the years of many generations." — Deuteronomy 32:7

Beloved Irondale,

I am writing to you from Philadelphia — the birthplace of our nation — where I have had the honor of representing our city among about one hundred mayors from across this country. *Let me say it plainly, because it matters: of all the mayors gathered here, I was the only one who came to stand for the State of Alabama. I did not carry that alone. I carried you.*

They taught me something here I want to teach you. We celebrate on the Fourth of July — the fireworks, the cookouts, the flags. But the vote for independence was cast on the second of July, 1776. A Yale scholar named Akhil Reed Amar stood before us and reminded us that *the words we hold most sacred- that all of us are created equal— did not have to be written into that document at all.* They wrote them anyway. Why? Because this was to be a moral nation from the very beginning. Those words became our north star — a star we have been reaching toward, and sometimes falling short of, ever since.

Now, you know my heart. You know I am writing a book about the forgotten architects — the pioneers whose genius helped build the modern world and whose names too often got left out of the telling. So imagine what it did to my spirit when a museum educator named Adrienne Whaley stood up at the Museum of the American Revolution and made this case: that *telling the whole American story does not weaken it. It strengthens it.*

She lifted names history tried to leave in the margins. *William Lee*, who was enslaved and yet rode beside General Washington through every year of the Revolution. *Phillis Wheatley*, whose poems crossed an ocean. *The Oneida Nation*, who weighed their own future and chose to stand. These are not footnotes. These are architects. And a nation brave enough to tell its whole truth — the glory and the grief — is a nation strong enough to become what it promised to be. *That, church, is the Beloved Community.*

Here is what else I learned, and it is the same thing I have believed since the first day you trusted me with this office. The mayors here said it better than I could: *long before Americans look to Washington, they look to City Hall.* Democracy is not measured only in marble buildings and grand speeches. It is measured on your block — by whether a child can walk to school safely, whether a family can build a future, whether a small business can open its doors. *Blueprints don't build communities. People do. Mayors do. Neighbors do. You do.*

So I am coming home. I am coming home with a fuller heart and a longer memory, and I am coming home just in time to *celebrate our nation's 250th birthday with you, not in Philadelphia, but in Irondale, at our Red White Blue & You Festival on the Fourth of July.* Because the same democracy they founded in that city 250 years ago is the one we get to keep building, block by block, right here.

Let us not grow weary in doing good. Two hundred and fifty years in, the work is not finished — it is ours to carry. And Irondale, we will carry it.

I'll see you on the Fourth.

Galatians 6:9 | DiE — Do It Every Day

Mayor James D. Stewart, Jr.

