

Inaugural Address of Attorney General Andrea Joy Campbell
As Prepared for Delivery
January 18, 2023

Good afternoon! Thank you M'Lady-Aunt Lois-Mom and my husband Matthew for your unconditional love, consistent and continued support and the privilege of swearing me into office.

M'Lady, as I always say, our house and family would fall apart without you! And I would not be here with sound mind, peace and purpose, without the wisdom and the seeds of faith you planted in me as a little girl.

Matthew Lyle Scheier, thank you for being an incredible partner, who stays on the roller coaster of life with me always encouraging and pushing me with love to be my best self and to pursue my God-given purpose.

Thank you to my entire family, those who have passed on and are here in spirit; those who are here today, including Uncle Ron/M'Zee, my father figure and the epitome of love, drive and conviction, and the best artist I know.

Uncle X, for your love, lightheartedness and passion for our youth; Godmother Kimby, our boys' Godmother, my cousin, but really my sister for always being there so supportive, giving and loving.

And my beautiful boys Alexander and Aiden: you are Mama and Dadda's light, joy and blessings who keep Mama grounded and always focused on what matters, and we - I - love you!

Thank you Stephanie Lovell for your warm welcome, your support, advice and mentorship – and your incredible service as the first and only Black first assistant to ever serve in the Attorney General office.

Thank you to all of the elected officials who are here today: federal, state, county and local electeds, and members of the judiciary who work tirelessly on behalf of the Commonwealth.

At this moment in our political history, we need to stand together and work in partnership to ensure families feel safe and protected. We need to ensure they have access to opportunities and services to meet our most pressing needs. I look forward to working with each and every one of you.

Thank you dearly to my predecessors and former Attorneys General Frank Belotti, Jim Shannon, Scott Harshbarger, Tom Reilly, Martha Coakley, and our new Governor Maura Healey.

From taking on the root causes of the opioid crisis to protecting us from a federal administration that was bent on intolerance and hate, Governor Healey and her office delivered progress for the people of Massachusetts. Our work ahead will build upon your leadership over the past eight years, and all those who came before. Thank you!

Thank you to Senator Edward William Brooke III, and his legacy. Sixty years ago this month, Senator Brooke was inaugurated as the 35th Attorney General of Massachusetts, becoming

Massachusetts first, Black Attorney General and the first Black Attorney General in the country — continuing Massachusetts' legacy of being pioneers, demonstrating that we do indeed live in the greatest state in the nation.

Thank you to my staff, past and present, and to my campaign co-chairs and volunteers for their hard work and dedication; and to my dedicated and hard-working transition committee, some of whom worked through vacations to ensure my team and I could hit the ground running.

Thank you to all who are participating in today's program, and all of you for your support and being here on this special day.

Today, I stand on the shoulders of all those who came before, far too many to name. Trailblazers of all different stripes and backgrounds who fought for a universal right to vote, a universal right to a high quality education, and to ensure that the rights, privileges and individual freedoms written in our state's Constitution be afforded to all of us equally without forgetting the sacrifices of our Indigenous communities.

Today, I stand on the shoulders of a beautiful and resilient Black people who stood up for civil rights, freedom, inclusion, love including interracial love;

Who fought to integrate our public schools, our higher education institutions, our law schools;

Who testified and were beaten while fighting to ensure our political system represents all of us;

A people who were enslaved, picking cotton to build the wealth and prosperity of this country;

A people who started businesses in the face of significant financial discrimination and exclusion to build wealth in their communities;

A people who became lawyers at prestigious law firms and fought hard to become a partner;

A people who invented the most beautiful artistry, music and culture;

A people who are the epitome of resilience!

And, Black women who have always been a necessary and essential part of the foundation, underpinnings and fabric of our American story as mothers, wives, caregivers, workers, freedom fighters, teachers, emotional confidantes, innovators and leaders.

These are the shoulders I stand on, and a people I represent who will always sustain my faith, hope and courage to forge ahead.

That, of course, includes my father.

You see, my father was born and raised in Boston in 1933. He was considered a quote-unquote criminal, but my father was incredibly intelligent. Having graduated from Boston Tech in 1951, he was accepted to Princeton University.

Instead of attending Princeton he chose a different path — one he hoped, as the eldest of seven, would allow him to provide for his family.

My father shared a frustration that many people, especially those of color, have felt: that even if you work hard and do all the right things, you still can be marginalized and relegated to low-wage jobs and poor housing stock in neighborhoods concentrated in poverty and with poor performing schools.

And in the 1930s, 40s, 50s and 60s that frustration was exacerbated when you were told explicitly this marginalization and exclusion was because of the color of your skin.

In spite of all that, my father, like so many parents, grandparents, guardians and caregivers including those with unaddressed trauma, who make poor choices, or struggle with substance use disorder, sought for his children to have more, to do better.

This desire that the next generation be afforded greater fairness, access and opportunity is not just a Black story – it's all of our story. Democrat, Republican, Independent; Urban, Rural, Indigenous; Disabled; Black, White, Latino, LatinX, Asian; LGBTQIA+; Elder, Youth; Veteran; Immigrant; and every religious denomination. All of us!

We, not merely from books and conversations, but by living life, understand the hesitancy that one might have in trusting, and believing that this office, this Attorney General and this government will deliver on that promise.

We will! Because we have no choice in the matter. My two boys are relying on me – on all of us – to deliver so they, too, have a fighting chance at being and doing better than the previous generation.

My story is built on the foundation of my father's life, his story.

My childhood was filled with incredible instability. When I was 8 months old, my biological mother died suddenly in a car accident while going to visit my father in prison.

I did not meet my father until I was 8-years-old because he was incarcerated.

And sadly, he too, would die unexpectedly when I was 19, a sophomore in college. I talked to my dad one morning and he died that same evening.

My brothers and I bounced around, living with relatives and sometimes in foster care. We grew up poor and in public housing.

Through my public school education, and the five public schools I attended, including Boston Latin School, I was blessed to have a support system that provided me with safe spaces to cope with this trauma and to learn and grow.

Blessed to have loving and passionate relatives who would fill the void.

Because of that education and so many caring individuals, who influenced my life a moment, a day or a season, I was blessed to be the first in my family to go to college and law school, graduating from Princeton University and UCLA Law School.

All of my biological parents are deceased; all of my biological grandparents are deceased.

Yet, the trauma continued. My brothers would sadly cycle in and out of the prison system.

And 11 years ago, Andre, my twin brother, would pass away while in the custody of the Department of Correction as a pretrial detainee, as a result of receiving inadequate healthcare, when he was only 29 years old.

So, yes, I deeply understand the magnitude of this historic day and that it is more than a personal triumph.

My hope is that every day, women and young people who look like me—and see the incredible work of this office—will feel less invisible, despairing and lonely because there continues to be a shining example of what is possible.

My hope is that these women, young people and those that have ever felt left out or left behind will feel emboldened to take more risks, exercise courage and will themselves achieve great success.

A shining example of what's possible. An impossible story made possible by the power and grace of God — that a girl from a poor family, who grew up in public housing in Boston, could become the 45th Attorney General of Massachusetts and the first Black woman and woman of color to be elected to Massachusetts statewide office.

There are some who want us to feel shame in our stories or even try to weaponize our stories against us. My response is two fold: no weapon formed against me shall prosper and because of our family history, struggle, encounters with the law and legal system, experiences and realizations, it begs the question, who better to do the job, to take on this challenge and do this critical work?

Our lived experience offers a distinct lens to many of the issues we are facing. It gives us the courage and conviction to not waste this opportunity and to fight for those who have felt left out and left behind for far too long!

Because, while our Constitution and laws guarantee equal rights, we recognize that the law has not always been the great equalizer.

The U.S. Constitution once considered my very existence to be only three-fifths of a human being and our laws sanctioned and supported a caste system, segregation, exclusion, and the violent, dehumanization of large swaths of people in this country.

It was not colorblind, rather specific as to who was subordinate and at the very bottom. Me. And those that looked like me.

But this office is indeed special and unique because it has the ability to shape law and policy, and thus the future. The power to shape our current society and where we want to go.

We have an opportunity to use all the tools of the office to ensure the next generation does better than the last.

Today, there are many laws that are meant to make society more fair and keep us safe from discrimination and hate, but they must be championed and enforced vigorously to ensure that our state's people experience fairness and feel safe and welcome in their everyday lives.

We can do that!

We can ensure that government is responsive to your needs and do it with integrity, empathy and urgency. Government must remove barriers and not stand in the way of progress or justice. As Attorney General, I will make sure that it does so the next generation can do better than the last.

The Massachusetts Attorney General's Office is the best law firm in the country. I am honored to go to work with the incredibly talented staff in Boston, New Bedford, Worcester and Springfield, who are dedicated to service and passionate about protecting and fighting for our residents.

These public servants understand that the power of this office is not their power or my power. It's power of the people, to be used for the people. And while this run was personal to me, it was not for me. It was for you! The people.

The people and families all across Massachusetts who are dreaming of a brighter future.

The question is: what do you want to do with your power? Because we certainly have more work to do to make sure the next generation does better than the last.

More to do for the children of Lawrence where I learned from Evelyn at the Greater Lawrence Community Action Council that children born there are born into poverty at twice the state average;

More to do for the parents I met, sadly too many to name, who shared painful stories about the suicide attempts made by their children, and their concerns for their mental health and well-being;

More to do for the seniors I met at the innovative Grove Street PACE program in Worcester and at the Age-Well Cafe in Boston, who are on fixed incomes concerned about the high cost of living in Massachusetts, rising utility bills and prices and incessant scams targeting them;

More to do for the young people I met at ROCA in Chelsea and UTEC in Lowell as they effectively work to break cycles of trauma, incarceration and violence; the youth at More Than Words in Waltham who are concerned about bullying, discrimination, health care costs especially for trans youth.

More to do for those in our disability community to lift up the up as models, places that ensure access and economic opportunity as the foundation of their business model like Bitty and Beaus in Melrose;

More to do to protect our constitutional rights and civil rights, as Byllye Avery and Ngina Lythcott stressed at the Provincetown GLAAD event while reminding the audience that as we fight for LGBTQIA rights, let's not forget about the struggle of Black and brown people, and the need for our white, gay brothers and sisters to have the uncomfortable conversations with their community and relatives about white supremacy – that this fight and all of the advances that have been made was borne out of an uprising of Black and brown trans people at a bar called Stonewall;

More to do for our immigrants, who are working two or three jobs, while facing wage-theft, financial scams, and discrimination to build upon the work of organizations like La Collaborativa in Chelsea and our unions across the state.

More to do to address food insecurity, price gouging and predatory business practices where organizations like the Amherst Survival Center are pushing policy makers to focus on the basics, like the fact that residents in the resource-rich Commonwealth of Massachusetts are struggling to eat and survive.

More work to do for the residents in Berkshire, Hampshire, Hampden, and Franklin Counties, who want a greater attorney general presence in their true western Massachusetts communities.

More to do with our public safety agencies, district attorneys and local electeds to get illegal guns and ghost guns off our streets and disrupt cycles of violence, while holding public officials accountable for wrongdoing that violates community trust.

More to do for survivors of domestic violence and family violence as Healing Abuse Working for Change (HAWC) in Salem is doing every day, ensuring survivors don't get re-traumatized navigating courts and agencies for protection and victim compensation;

More to do to address the opioid crisis, drug abuse, substance use disorder and cycles of incarceration with community-based treatment organizations and our sheriffs and law enforcement agencies – all while cracking down on drug companies that have made this epidemic worse.

More to do to protect our environment and to ensure the climate justice movement includes communities of color and our rural communities who face similar inequities as residents live in concentrations of poverty.

Together, we can and will do more! If Massachusetts is going to be the leader it has always been, then we must do more with a sense of boldness, urgency and take risks.

We can expand the reach of the office and bring the community into our work by making the office more accessible, strengthening our regional offices, building bridges between our office and community members and organizations, and ensuring our office has the linguistic and cultural competency to serve all people in Massachusetts in each of our diverse communities.

We can prioritize our children and their well-being, working to ensure our children have access to behavioral health services and a high-quality education while taking on discrimination and bullying and companies that target our youth with products that cause them harm.

We can provide greater economic opportunity by tackling wage theft, protecting residents from predatory practices and scams, fighting to ensure families have the tools they need to buy or stay in their homes, and punishing unfair or discriminatory practices that stand in the way of upward mobility and opportunity.

We can take on corruption, and hold those who misuse positions of trust or taxpayer dollars accountable for their actions, including by tackling the lack of transparency and accountability behind our prison walls and in our criminal and juvenile justice systems.

We can create safer, healthier communities by fighting to protect our environment, our air, water and land while promoting green energy, defending our common-sense gun laws and working with organizations that are breaking cycles of violence and pushing for meaningful criminal legal reform, prison reform, and juvenile justice. Because everyone – no matter where they live – should feel safe and secure in our homes, small businesses, and neighborhoods.

We can make sure the work and structure of the office reflects the intersectionality of all of these critical issues.

And in Massachusetts, we will always stand up for reproductive and abortion rights and protect the right for each and every person to decide whether, when, and how to have and parent a child.

And, when we do all this, we will show people and leaders in Massachusetts and all across this country what's possible.

I begin this journey with a deep sense of gratitude and a profound understanding of the responsibilities ahead.

I am deeply humbled by the trust you have placed in me.

And I'm ready to get to work in partnership with all of you.

Thank you.

God bless you. God bless the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

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