

Mayor's Black History Month Reception

Councillor Thompson's Remarks

Wednesday, February 28, 2018

Good evening.

Welcome to the Mayor's Black History Month reception.

To begin our reception on the right note, I would like to ask Vanessa Lu to sing our national anthem. Vanessa is one of Canada's most promising young song writers, and exciting new performers.

She draws on her church music roots as a pastor's daughter to fuse a number of musical forms to create unique, imaginative and compelling songs.

Would you all please rise for the singing of our national anthem.

Thank you Vanessa.

I would now like to introduce spoken word poet, actor and comedian David Delisca.

Born in Haiti, raised in Florida and now residing in Toronto, David is a four-time member of the Toronto Poetry Slam's National Team and a spoken word national champion. His work is widely published and he spends a great deal of his time sharing his talents with others through numerous local arts initiatives.

Please welcome David to the podium.

Thank you David.

And thanks to all of you for joining us this evening as we mark the conclusion of this year's celebration of the rich history, and significant contributions of Toronto's Black community.

There is little I can tell this gathering about Black history that you do not already know.

Most of you here play a role in this history. Some have made, and continue to make, landmark contributions.

As a City Councillor, I draw upon your contributions for inspiration, strength and guidance.

I strive to follow in the footsteps of alderman W. P. Hubbard, Toronto's first Black politician, who remained in office through 13 elections and became Vice Chairman of the city's Board of Control, second only in rank to the Mayor.

Although, I think that 13 terms is a bit beyond my reach.

And as I enter City Hall each workday, I am reassured by the fact that the ground below was purchased from a Black landowner.

As Black History Month comes to a close, we turn away from the past and look squarely at the future. The history that will be celebrated in the decades and centuries ahead has yet to be made.

And we are the ones who will make it.

So while we already have much to be proud of, we have much more waiting to be done.

We must continue to fight for the dignity of individuals of all races and cultures against the vestiges of racism that still hide in the dark corners of our institutions, our systems and our practices.

We must inspire, engage and encourage young people not only to expect more **for** themselves, but **from** themselves.

We must work tirelessly to ensure that these same young people have a choice of opportunities, and the tools they need to take advantage of them.

One of the people leading this effort is with us today. The Honourable Mitzi Hunter is Ontario's Minister of Advanced Education and Skills Development. Her Ministry plays a vital role in ensuring that resources are available for young people to advance their education and their careers.

Please welcome Minister Hunter to the podium.

Thank you Minister.

Now I would like to introduce our host for this evening's event. Mayor John Tory is a long-time supporter of Toronto's Black community, and a man known for his commitment to diversity and inclusion in all aspects of City life.

A recipient of both the Harry Jerome Award and the African Canadian Achievement Award, he received the Order of Canada for his role as a lifelong champion of the Greater Toronto Region.

Please welcome our Mayor, John Tory.