

News

Lumumba Becomes Youngest Mayor of Jackson, Mississippi

Chokwe Antar Lumumba expected to usher in a new era of leadership in Jackson

By **Othor Cain**
The Mississippi Link
NNPA Member

Chokwe Antar Lumumba became the youngest mayor in the history of Jackson, Miss., when he was sworn-in last month in front of a standing room-only crowd at Jackson's Convention Center Complex.

Lumumba, 34, defeated the business-friendly incumbent Mayor Tony Yarber after losing to him in a special election in 2014. The seat was left vacant when Lumumba's father, Chokwe Lumumba, died after serving less than a year in office.

Lumumba called his victory a celebration of the city's unity.

"It's about our collective efforts to move Jackson forward," Lumumba said to a cheering crowd.

A blessing deferred isn't a blessing denied.

Even though he had hoped to fulfill the unexpired term of his father in 2014, Lumumba said he was grateful for losing to Yarber, during his first campaign.

"I'm actually grateful that we lost the election in 2014, not because the sincerity was not there, not because we didn't believe we would have done a good job, but, we've been able to appreciate far more what's going on with the city of Jackson, and I've been able to ap-

preciate more within myself," Lumumba shared during an interview with "Democracy Now!"

Lumumba continued: "People have to remember, in 2014, not only did I bury my father in a two-month time span and

“When I become mayor, you become mayor”

then enter into an election, my wife was pregnant with our first child. And so there was a world of change. You had a first-time candidate, who had not run for junior class president, much less mayor of a city. And so, we've been able to, you know, gather more information and position ourselves better."

Lumumba said that everything happens in a perfect timing.

"We're happy where we find ourselves at this time, to move forward the agenda that my father embarked on, an agenda of a people's platform, one that was not only, you know, symbolic of his work in his short term as mayor, but symbolic of a lifetime of work, that he subscribed to and also ultimately dedicated his family toward," said Lumumba.

During Lumumba's swearing-in service, on



Chokwe Antar Lumumba (left) is sworn-in, becoming Jackson's youngest mayor. Court of Appeals Judge Latrice Westbrooks (right) administers the oath of office to Lumumba as his wife Ebony looks on.

the same stage where his father stood on and was sworn-in, just four years ago, he became overwhelmed with emotions.

"A son only holds his father's hand for a short while, but he holds his heart forever," he said as he fought back tears. "I can't help, but to be emotional today."

The young mayor also paid homage to his mother.

"My mom's spirit was infectious, she was the first person to tell me that I was brilliant," said Lumumba. "If you had the privilege of knowing her or meeting her, she is someone that you would never forget."

In Chicago, earlier this summer, speaking

at the People's Summit, Lumumba shared his thoughts about "the people's platform."

"From the moment we announced, we worked hard and aggressively on an agenda that included social justice, economic democracy and making certain that the people had a voice," he said. "That's our story, and we're sticking to it."

Lumumba said that he plans to implement "people's assemblies," that speak directly to his campaign promise to the community that he serves.

"When I become mayor, you become mayor," he said, echoing a campaign. "These assemblies will give residents an op-

portunity to participate in the decision-making process."

Attorney and die-hard Jacksonian Carlyn Hicks described Lumumba in a post on her Facebook page: "My brother, my friend, and now...our mayor. The youngest mayor in the history of our city, an advocate's advocate, a man's man of integrity and candor, and a thoughtful, critically-thinking mind of sheer brilliance."

Lumumba said in Chicago that all eyes were on Jackson.

"So what happens in Jackson, Mississippi, impacts each and every one of us. And so we have to make the decision that we're going to start controlling the way electoral politics proceed. We've made the decision that we're going to be the most radical city on the planet, that we're going to make certain that we change the whole scope of electoral politics," said Lumumba. "No longer will we allow an individual to step before us and tell us all of the great things that they're going to accomplish on our behalf, only

to find that nothing in their past demonstrates a sincerity, a willingness or an ability to do so."

Tackling the city's budget is top priority for Lumumba, who is also known as a social justice activist and attorney.

"Shortly after we take office, we have to pass a budget. And so, it's important that we have the right people in place," said Lumumba. "We have a transition team that's in place right now, looking at the issues which Jackson is facing, making certain that we don't make plans just off conjecture, but a fact-based analysis of where we find our city, and bringing together not only people who have the acumen and ability and skill to do the job, but people who have a passion, a passion which goes beyond just the way we see electoral politics, but a passion to change people's lives."

What Does the Name Lumumba Mean?

Many have; many do; and many will, mispronounce and misspell Lumumba's name, including this writer. When asked the origin and meaning of his name, he shared a quick historical perspective with democyncnow.org: So, my father changed his name when he was in law school, and accepted a name that he believed to be more culturally identifiable. Chokwe is the name of a tribe in the Angola region, a tribe that was resistant to the slave trade. The name Chokwe means "hunter." Antar is the name of a historic poet and warrior who died while saving a woman from drowning; Antar means "poet" and "warrior." Lumumba, given that name from our namesake, Patrice Lumumba, the former prime minister of the Congo, Lumumba means "gifted."



A career you can be proud of.

Being a carpenter isn't just a job. It's a way of life. We're devoted to strengthening the lives of our members with steady work, wealth and personal growth.

We take a stand for our members and all workers. We work together to lead the building industry in safety, training and compensation. We create rich lives for our members and partners.

To learn more about becoming a union carpenter, go to NWCarpenters.org.

PORTLAND:
1636 East Burnside, Portland, OR 97214 | 503.261.1862

HEADQUARTERS:
25120 Pacific Hwy S, #200, Kent, WA 98032 | 253.954.8800

More than 20,000 members in the Pacific Northwest.

Make *The Skanner* part of your daily routine



Grab a headline on your mobile device.



Enjoy an in-depth read on your desktop.



Receive **Breaking News** in your inbox.



Page through the print edition online.