

**BRONX BOROUGH PRESIDENT  
ADOLFO CARRION, JR.**

**STATE OF THE BOROUGH SPEECH, AS DELIVERED, AT  
HERBERT LEHMAN HIGH SCHOOL ON  
FEBRUARY 2, 2006**

Thank you, thank you, thank you very much. Good afternoon, Bronx. Good afternoon. Good afternoon.

That's the Bronx I know. I am absolutely, absolutely thrilled to be here and I want to thank Lehman High School for opening up its doors. And isn't Ritchie Torres absolutely incredible?

What a team. They best represent our aspirations and who we are as New Yorkers, as Americans, and certainly as Bronxites. I want to thank the principal of this great school, Principal Robert Leder. Since -- where is he? There you are. Great leader in education. And since his arrival here in 1979, the graduation, the graduates that are going to college, went from 59 percent to 94 percent of the school going to college. Good job.

I want to recognize some of our good friends that are here, people who dedicate their lives to helping build a stronger Bronx and a stronger city. I see so many of you out there and so many good friends and people who are in business and politics and in the faith communities and in education.

And you saw that great production that was put together. That is the work of Derek Woods and Michael Knobbe and I think they deserve a big applause. Bravo.

But let me recognize somebody in particular, because in that video there were a number of moments where you saw certain individuals that were signature figures in the resurgence of the Bronx, people who represent the best of what we can be, the most hopeful side of who we are, people who rejected definition by circumstances but preferred to define themselves in the cloak of hope and opportunity, and one of those people in particular is here today, and I am so glad that he is here. You saw him in the video, you saw him raise that trophy for the Bronx when in 1997 the Bronx won the All America City Award for its dramatic turn-around. He has been a voice, not only for the Bronx, but for every New Yorker that has aspirations and refuses to be defined by the limits of what's immediately around him, a leader in our city, our former Borough President and my friend, Fernando Ferrer. Thank you. He deserves a great applause. Bravo.

We've also been joined by a number of friends and elected officials, and I'm going to take the time and you won't count it against my speech time. I'm sure you won't, because Bronx people are forgiving people, but there are some other friends that have really shaped the Bronx and impacted our lives and inspired us in so many ways and work in the legislative halls in Albany and the City Council to try to represent our interests, and someone who represented us for more than ten years in the State Assembly and who was the Chairman of the Democratic Party, our good friend, Assembly -- former Assemblymember Roberto Ramirez. Thank you, Roberto. Thank you very much for the work that you have done for the Bronx.

I haven't seen my good friend, our County Chairman, but I have to tell you that I have a very, very close experience with him as we have engaged in some forms of activism that got us into a little bit of trouble, as you know, and he continues to be that kind of prophetic voice, a voice of conscience, and I'm so glad that he is now the democratic leader here in the County of the Bronx and I -- if he is not here, I'm sure he is on his way, Assembly Member, Jose Rivera, the Chairman of the Democratic Party.

And we've been joined by a number of elected officials, and I would like for you to know that they're here and for you to recognize them: Assembly Member Jeffrey Dinowitz; Assemblywoman Naomi Rivera; Councilwoman and the leader of the New York City Council Delegation for the Bronx, Councilwoman Maria Baez- thank you; State Senator Efrain Gonzalez; Our Lehman High School alumni- Assembly Member Rubin Diaz, Jr. is here; Another Diaz from the Bronx, Assembly Member Luis Diaz; a new and dynamic Councilwoman, and I guess, if you're in your first term, you're always new, but she has certainly taken on some huge challenges and is representing the Bronx well in the City Council, City Councilwoman, Maria del Carmen Arroyo; Council Member and Chair of the Finance Committee for the City Council, and Councilman David Weprin from Queens. Former Council Member and still very active in the Bronx, Councilwoman -- former Councilwoman June Eisland is with us today. Thank you, June. Thank you for your years of service.

Representing Governor George Pataki, a staple in the Bronx, somebody who everybody knows, Joe Ithier. Joe, thank you for being here. New York State Senator -- I guess we can also call him a new Senator still, New York State Senator Jose Marcos Serrano. And my good friend, and someone who I thought I saw in the audience, Charlie King, is here. Charlie King is the candidate for Attorney General of the State of New York.

I want to say thank you for all of you being here. I want to thank the Community Board Chairs, members and managers, the Borough Commissioners, the people who make this borough work, the hospitals, the college presidents, everyone who works day in and day out to make sure that the Bronx works and that this come-back continues.

Just within the last 48 hours, we lost a great American. I think she deserves our recognition. She marched, she spoke, she sacrificed her personal time. She has been a prophetic voice in American history alongside her husband, and life-long, Martin King. That's Coretta Scott King. Please recognize Coretta Scott King.

Now, I'm going to try to be as brief as I possibly can. You've heard "State Of" speeches, State Of The Union, State Of The State, State Of The City. I even heard a State Of The City speech in Houston, Texas last week, believe it or not. And so in those speeches you often get a lot of statistics and presentation of numbers and charts and bells and whistles, and I'm not going to do that today.

So we identified the person who started the clapping. We know who you are and we know how to find you.

Rather, I'm going to talk a little bit with you about my premise of public service and where I think we should go. And let me begin by saying what I believe and what drives the Bronx and us as a community.

Four years ago, I was entrusted with the responsibility of becoming the chief executive of this great borough. I entered public service a long time ago, not as an elected official, because I believed I could make a difference in the way that our city is led. I believe, as you do, in personal responsibility, and I believe, as you do, that a community is made up of individuals that should and must take responsibility and that we must demand that each individual be a responsible and active member of the community.

I also believe, no matter how it sounds, that we cannot expect government to solve all our problems, and I think we know that, and I think if you look at that video and you look at the year 1975 and the year 1977 when Howard Cosell said those words that still ring around the world, unfortunately, government did not lead us out of that crisis; it was the people; it was acts of individual courage; it was a belief that we must not be defined with what is before us, by what is before us or around us.

Government's ability to solve problems, as we have learned, is limited. We should use it to set the stage for private enterprise and private individuals finding the best solutions for their problems in their neighbors and in their communities. And that's why I say, you heard it right again in the video, that I certainly believe with all my heart that the best social program, the best anti-poverty program, is a job, and we must get people to work.

I believe that it's through the creation of public and private partnerships that government can have the best impact on the social and economic fabric of our society. The three basic functions of government are to protect its citizens, both their persons and their civil liberties; to safeguard and act as the custodian of our natural resources, because it's all we've got on this little blue planet in the Milky Way; and to create a stimulating and stable environment for business and economic activity.

And let me suggest something to you. You all know that I grew up in church. I'm a preacher's kid; my father was a pastor for 40 years. I grew up in the shadow of a man that I can say with confidence was a man of God and that understood certain universal principles, in spite of the fact that he was walking in a Protestant path; that he understood that the principles that he was advocating cut across all faiths and all beliefs that were essentially universal principles that spoke to the human condition, and one of the things that we heard constantly was that you reap what you sow. You reap what you sow. And so as we go through this little discourse, let me keep that in the back of your mind, let it ring in the back of your mind as I walk through this and bring to it a close. So let me tell you what's going on in the Bronx, and I'm going to try to do it as quickly as possible.

You know that public safety is the fundamental building block of a free and democratic society. You've heard me talk about this before. We cannot operate a democracy in and a free market without public safety, and the soldiers of freedom in our streets are our police officers and our firefighters. They keep it all together.

And so crime is down in the Bronx. You saw the statistics. Gun violence, unfortunately, remains an obnoxious presence in our streets that we have to work on, and I'm here today to say that I will work with Mayor Bloomberg and the members of the City Council and the State Legislature and the members of Congress and anybody who's interested in reducing gun violence. We need to do something about this.

Domestic violence remains still too prevalent, and domestic violence, unfortunately, manifests itself not only on adult-on-adult domestic violence, but the horrors that we are seeing recently, back to back, in our great city. I want to thank Assembly Member Naomi Rivera and Senator Ruth Hassel-Thompson for taking the lead on the Domestic Violence Legislative Task Force that I charged them with last year. They took it up and they have been active voices to fight against domestic violence. Thank you. Thank you, Assembly Member Rivera, thank you Senator Thompson.

I also want to give a big thank you to Patrol Borough Bronx Commander, the top cop in the County of the Bronx and, more importantly, he's a Bronx boy, Assistant Chief Tom Purtell. Thank you, sir. And thank you for all of the leaders of our precincts and our police force in the Bronx.

I want to also recognize the families and pay homage to those that we've lost recently. You know Police Officer, 28-year old Danny Enchategu, unfortunately we lost him right here in the East Bronx

as he was trying to foil a robbery, (addresses family in Spanish), you are in our prayers. To the family of Inspector Michael Shortell -- he ran Bronx Narcotics -- what a gentleman that man was. Unfortunately, he was taken away from us too soon. And I ask you today to please keep in your prayers Officer Eric Hernandez. We have seen the images over and over and over in that White Castle restaurant on 169th Street and Webster Avenue where they beat him down so bad that he already had a leg amputated just yesterday, and the prospect for his recovery are slim, unfortunately. Please keep him in your prayers.

Yesterday, we had a six-alarm fire on Gerard and 168th Street. 280 fire fighters needed to fight that fire. Hundreds of people are now without homes, but only one person was hurt in that fire. Please give a big round of applause to our fire fighters and the work that they do. Thank you.

Let me say that I will do my utmost to fight any attempts to close firehouses in the County of the Bronx. So I want to thank -- I want to thank Senator Jeff Klein and Assembly Member Jeff Dinowitz and Council Member Oliver Koppell. You saw them probably last Sunday holding a press conference up in Norwood -- in Woodlawn, because of the possible closing of that fire house up there. We need to recognize the families of fire fighters that died on Black Sunday and throughout this past year. Just the other day, we put a plaque up in a fire house in memory of Lieutenant Curtis Meyran, Firefighter John Bellew, Firefighter Michael Locklin, and Firefighter David Romero. Representing the fire department is James Esposito, Acting Borough Commander. On their behalf and on our collective behalf, we want to thank you, Jim Esposito and all the fire fighters that defend us and work for us every day.

I want to recognize another young man who did something pretty dramatic recently. He caught a baby that was thrown out a window in a fire. You remember that, huh? The pictures all over the newspaper, the 6:00 news? He works for the Housing Authority here in the Bronx. He's a supervisor at Morris Houses and he's here today, Felix Vasquez. Please recognize him. Thank you Felix. Bravo. Bravo. I guess we can say good catch. Thank God.

Let me talk to you a little bit about what's happening in terms of civic and community responsibility in the Bronx. When I first became Borough President, one of the things that I said is that we need to start to clean up the mess, we need to get people involved in the churches and the synagogues and the temples. We established a Team Up To Clean Up The Bronx program, to start with a couple of hundred volunteers, and we asked people to work with the Sanitation Department, the Parks Department, and some other agencies and local businesses and tenant organizations and get out into their neighbors for a couple of days and help clean up the neighborhood and clean up the graffiti and do all these things that we think about every day and we all don't have time to do. So people have rolled up their sleeves in the hundreds, in the hundreds around this borough. First year, several hundred. We're up to 700 volunteers in that Team Up To Clean Up The Bronx. It want to say thank you to them.

Civic and community responsibility. We created something called the Bronx Clergy Task Force and people of different faiths came together to figure out how to solve problems. I'm going to be talking about this just a little bit later as we close, because I have a challenge and a charge for the Bronx Clergy Task Force, but I want to thank them for ministering to the needs of the Bronx.

As it relates to health and wellness, in the last round we fought health care cuts and invested \$1,300,000 in mammography equipment for Bronx hospitals over the last year, year and a half. We launched the Bronx Fitness Campaign inviting everybody to get off their duff, turn off their TV, get out into the parks, visit their doctor. We used the hospitals, the schools and every partner we could find to make sure that people got active, that they ate well, that they saw their doctor and not use the emergency room as their primary care provider. The word is getting out there. It's about taking action.

I want to thank Dr. Jane Bedell, who is the Assistant Commissioner and Director of the Bronx Public Health Office, for stepping up and doing the great work that she's doing to help improve health conditions in the Bronx. Dr. Jane Bedell, please give her a big hand. Bravo.

In terms of economic development, saw that we had a dramatic reduction, 41 percent, and it's still too high. We went from nearly 12 percent to around six percent. We were hovering around one percent above the national average. It's starting to creep up again and then it comes back down. December – in November it was high and in December it came down an entire point to around seven percent, and now it's starting to creep back up. But it keeps -- it's generally going in the right direction, and part of the reason that it's going in the right direction is because we've instituted some programs and some initiatives, like the Buy Bronx Campaign. We tell developers, "You come into this town of 1,400,000, you don't parachute into the Bronx with all your relationships and all your business associates without first sitting at the table with the Bronx community to do business with Bronx businesses, to hire Bronx people, and to move the economy of the Bronx."

That's why -- that's why nearly 30,000 Bronxites found jobs in the last four years, that's why the Bronx has led the city in job creation, and last year I think it was a speech that the mayor was giving, and he's talking about statistics and kind of paused for a moment and he said, "Wow, I didn't realize that the Bronx had led all the five boroughs in private sector job creation."

A lot is happening in this borough, and often it gets unreported. We've got some large projects. Just recently we opened the old Fulton Fish Market, saw the fish being thrown around by the fish mongers. Those are jobs and workers and people engaged in economic activity in our borough. Thousands of new businesses have been incorporated in the Bronx recently and there is a handout that gives you some detail.

We've helped small businesses, working with Ray Salaberrios and the Bronx Overall Economic Development Corporation. That entire team of people is a great team helping to assist Bronx businesses. And we worked with the City, with the City's Business Solutions Center, and helped 1,500 small businesses with technical assistance and lent \$22 million to small businesses.

And housing. I remember my first State Of The Borough address as if it were yesterday, and I said that we would create between ten and fifteen thousand units of housing in the Bronx in the first term. Well, we've created 15,000 units of housing in the Bronx in four years.

We recently had a great victory. You know the Mitchell-Lama program, how difficult it is that they are aging out and they're trying to hold onto affordable housing for New Yorkers, becoming more and more unaffordable for the average working family, not a home for the middle class. It's becoming a city of haves and have-nots. One fifth of the New York City population is living in poverty. Some people argue that it's nearly 25 percent of the city population. Recent reports and the Mayor, in his State of the City report, referred to it, the Governor referred to it. Everybody is asking the critical question: How do we close the gap? What are we going to do? Well, we have a great victory in the Bronx recently.

We helped to craft a deal, working with Assemblyman Rubin Diaz, Jr. for the 1865 tenants at Lafayette Morrison and Lafayette Boynton Mitchell-Lama so that the tenants could purchase, under great duress, because they were competing against the big boys. They had big bankers and big lawyers and people who were very interested in buying those 1865 units on the waterfront in Soundview -- you know what I'm talking about -- large apartment houses when you drive to the end of the Bronx River Parkway, you see them there, right near the Long Island Sound on the East River, and everybody "saw gold in them thar" buildings. But we took up the fight. Thank you, Assemblyman Rubin Diaz, Jr. for that the great victory that we were able to achieve. Thank you. Now, I believe that we can use that

engagement and that kind of negotiation for future opportunities to transform these Mitchell Lamas into affordable home ownership opportunities for working families.

On the education of our youth, we opened 50 new small schools in the Bronx and I'm not even going to get into all the statistics about where we're going, where graduation rates are going up, attendance rates, dramatically, dramatically went up as a result of some of the engagement with the students in these new smaller school models.

And I'll talk a little bit about some of the initiatives and recognize some of the officials that are here and our seniors, our elderly, which I consider our foundation. We have invested in four years more than \$16 million in senior services and in housing assistance for the Bronx's seniors. We're going to continue to do that.

And I remember when I first got elected, one of the first things that we had to do, we had five prospective developments sites for senior housing. Each of them was stuck in the mud because they were toxic sites; they had the stuff in it that you can't construct on. I think they call them brown fields, or something like that. And what we did was, five times over, we gave each of them, from our capital budget, a half million dollars to clean up the sites and we created hundreds and hundreds of units of housing for seniors. We're going to continue to do that as well.

Now here's where we're going. You know that public safety is the fundamental building block. We are going to continue to expand our efforts to address domestic violence, and there are federal grants that we are now applying for. We're going to work with Assemblywoman Rivera and Senator Thompson as they lead the Bronx Legislative Task Force on Domestic Violence. We're going to work with the City Council and the leadership from the Bronx to ensure that we get the resources that we need to combat domestic violence.

We're going to attack this issue of gun violence head on in the Bronx, in our streets, in the legislative halls, working with our elected officials. And let me ask you a favor. Each of you can send an e-mail, a letter, can make a phone call. The ban on assault weapons expired, and it seemed like it caught the entire nation sleeping. And a couple of people -- there were some conversations in the newspapers about the importance on the assault weapons ban. It was in place -- from the Clinton Administration forward, it was in place. You remember the public discussion about why does somebody need to walk around with an AK-47 or whatever those guns are called? The police know what it means. These are cop-killer guns. Nobody that has any intention of hunting down a deer, of going duck hunting so they can have patte, is going to use an assault weapon. So who is using assault weapons in our society? We know who they are. They're the bad guys. They want to take our freedom away from us. They pray on our communities, and so I ask you to send a message to the President of the United States of America and to the leaders of the Congress of the United States to renew the assault weapons ban now.

Here's where we're going as it relates to the civic and community responsibility and our children: This week, Quachon Brown was tortured and murdered, a little boy. And you know I have four children. I call them my four bambinos, A.J., who's seven and a half; Olivia, who is going to be eleven in a couple of weeks, on March 12th; Sara, who is 13 -- she's here today -- Little Sarita; and my oldest daughter, Rocky, who is 16 and a half, and who is starting to hunt for colleges already. So she's got my trips laid out for me to go to college. They are our most important asset and treasure and investment. We have no future without them. We can't do anything without our children. The promise of America, the promise of the Bronx, the promise of this democracy and the American enterprise is in our children. You see it in people, like Ritchie Torres and the kids here who are winning championships in moot court and defying the odds. And that's who we are. That's the essence of what it is to be in this enterprise.

And when we see a little bambino like Quachon Brown tortured and murdered and then, just about a week ago, recently, next, Nixmary Brown, tortured and murdered -- and I mentioned a Clergy Task Force earlier today -- I am calling on the Clergy Task Force to make this their priority, their sole mission and priority, to help save our children. I am calling on every school leader and teacher to take action immediately if they see signs of neglect and abuse. I'm asking you that every single Bronxite take the responsibility in their own family, in their own neighborhood, in their own buildings, to report what you hear and what you see.

And to the mayor of our great city, Mayor Michael Bloomberg, you have made a critical decision to keep Commissioner John Mattingly in place. In any business or organization, a manager is measured by the outcomes they produce.

And so, Mr. Mayor, while we support your efforts for reform and reorganization, and the new resources that you have given to the Agency for Children's Services, we are gravely concerned about the leadership of this agency. We must not let another child fall through the large crevasses, not cracks, that exist in this bureaucracy. One child is one too many. This has to stop.

And so I want to say thank you to the legislator that has stood up recently, Assemblywoman Carmen Arroyo. She joined Assemblywoman Naomi Rivera on the steps of the courthouse calling for legislative change and other members of the Legislature and the City Council joined them, Council Member Baez and others. The women in particular were pained by the death of Nixmary. As mothers, they understood the direct connection. So thank you to all of you for stepping forward courageously. Thank you.

And so, for our children, we must do good things. We must give them good activities, we must give them the places where they can engage in activities that will take them through the rites of healthy passage to young adulthood and adulthood. And so today I'm announcing a new initiative. This year we will create the Bronx Sports Commission and we will appoint a Bronx Sports Commissioner to pull all the little leagues, all the soccer moms and dads, all the softball players out there, all the little baseball players, from pee-wee to senior, everybody. There are so many efforts being done.

I want to bring all of these people together to have a conversation about our children and to wrap our arms around them and figure out ways that we can give them more positive activities, more sports, more recreation, and we will engage the business community in supporting the Bronx Commission for Sports so that we can give these kids the chance that they deserve.

Let me say also -- and we've been joined by -- you all remember Maria from Sesame Street? right? Everybody knows Maria from Sesame Street? Her real name, for me, is Sonia Monzano. She's with us today. Is Sonia here? Sonia Monzano. So nice to see you. Thank you for being here. The unmistakable, imitable voice of Maria from Sesame Street rings in our ears. For those of us who either have children or grew up in last two or three generations. Maria has taken on the charge with us and a group of elected officials who are working on this issue to help create the Bronx Children's Museum. And so just a couple of months ago we were together in the South Bronx because, at the moment, we can't afford to build a museum, but we can certainly have a traveling museum, and so we put a board to go with the help of legislators and with the help of the Children's Museum of Manhattan. And I see Andy here. Thank you to the Children's Museum of Manhattan and the board members of the Children's Museum of the Bronx.

And when you want to start something, you have to put a board together and then you go to the board members and you ask them for lots of money. And so putting together this money -- and we've been able to get money from private sources and hopefully soon some government dollars so that we can --

I don't know if you've seen the Museum of American -- what's it called? The Museum of Natural History? The one on Central Park West? Help me out here, somebody. American Museum of Natural History. Thank you, thank you. It's been a long time. Well, they have a traveling museum, and we took that model up and we worked with Andy and the team from Children's Museum of Manhattan. They've given us a lot of technical assistance and we launched the first steps of the traveling museum in 2005. And, ladies and gentlemen, I submit to you that by 2009 we're going to have a standing Children's Museum in the Bronx, in a building housed to help our children expand their horizons and their possibilities. We're going to do it. We're going to do it.

How am I doing on time? Wrap it up. Wrap it up. Their arms are getting tired. As it relates to House of Wellness, let me talk a little bit about this quickly. We know that 3 million New Yorkers and 44 million Americans lack health insurance. Three-quarters of the people who are uninsured in New York State are working people, and the Bronx is no different, except that as recent cent as 2003 there were 100,000 residents of our county who were eligible for public health insurance but were not enrolled. And half of these people, guess who they were? Bambinos, children.

So, again, as we did the last year, the year before that, we will fight alongside our state legislative delegation from the Bronx to protect the Bronx from the cuts that are proposed to Medicaid and to the hospitals and the hospital tax, for God's sake. Can you believe how obnoxious this can be? A hospital tax. There's something as a hospital tax. I don't know who invented it, but that has to be fought against as well.

And I want to announce a new idea. We want to create something called Hope/Health Opportunity Prescription for Everyone. And the idea is that along with aggressively promoting public health 6 insurance to small businesses, the centerpiece of this Bronx initiative will be to create a small business health insurance cooperative. We will target 8,300 businesses, 30,000 workers, and we will use their purchasing power as a collective to strike a deal or to create some competition in the insurance industry so that they can, as a collective, as a Bronx cooperative, buy health insurance. We will create a win/win for the businesses and for Bronx workers. We're going to launch it this year.

What's coming up on the economic development side? I have to pause here because yesterday, if you saw the papers today, we penned an agreement with a major developer here in the Bronx. You all know about the Bronx Terminal Market. A million square feet of development in the South Bronx. The old Bronx Terminal Market that was decrepid, that -- I used to call it a commercial ghetto, because that's what it was -- will be transformed into a place of opportunity. And I would like, at this time, for the entire City Council delegation, under the leadership of Maria Baez, to please stand up and accept our gratitude and our applause for your leadership on this issue. Thank you. This will guarantee construction contracts, construction jobs, retail jobs, and improved quality of life, and improved environment.

Anheiser-Busch will be moving into the Bronx, into a nearly 200,000 square foot facility with 100 new permanent jobs, 322 new workers coming into the Bronx, 390 construction jobs, and, guess what? They will also buy Bronx and invest in the Bronx.

Fordham Place, you know the old Sears building on the corner of Webster Avenue and Fordham Road? Who doesn't know that. That is consummately the Bronx. That old building, that old beautiful building, will be converted into a 260,000 square foot office and retail building, a signature building right on the corner of Webster Avenue and Fordham Road.

And of course we have the Kingsbridge Armory. Boy, have we been talking about this for a long time. I am sick and tired of talking about the Kingsbridge Armory. We need some action, and I think, I am

confident, that working with the Bronx leadership, we're going to be able to, in the next 24 months, see the kind of action that we haven't seen in dozen of years at the Kingsbridge Armory, to create educational space and retail space and jobs, and construction jobs, and opportunity for the Bronx.

And of course, there is Yankee Stadium Neighborhood Redevelopment Plan, which is very exciting. When I became Borough President -- and Freddy Ferrer remembers this very well -- it was the end of the Guliani Administration, large public arguments about George wanting to leave the Bronx, going to New Jersey, going to the West Side of Manhattan. And so we said, "Go ahead, if you want to go." And you know when you make somebody say uncle? They realize that the location was the best location in the region, that the Bronx was their home since 1923, and that we struck a deal with them and we began the discussions about this unusually beneficial relationship. We will have a new \$800 million stadium, a new Central Park with baseball field for the children of that neighborhood, with a track and field with lights, with basketball courts, a new tennis center by the Harlem River. We will build a new hotel and convention center in that area, we will build a new rail station, a new ferry landing. And Bronx people will build it.

This spring, we will launch a series of housing forums to develop strategies for market-driven affordable housing and to promote home ownership, and I want you to stay tuned for that, because we're going to look at new and creative strategies. I think one of the pieces in this puzzle is the question of where pension funds are investing their dollars. I know that there are some creative pension fund managers around the country that are taking their dollars and putting them in the creation of affordable housing. I think we need to ask the question right here in the State of New York. Where are the pension funds investing to build opportunities in our communities? We will ask that question.

I have a quick announcement. I want to touch on every issue, and we've done a lot in the environmental area. We've created a fund that is a revolving, no-interest, no-interest loan fund so that you can improve your heating plant and make your buildings and your businesses work more efficiently. We've done a number of things - green roofs all over the borough, 58,000 square feet of green roofs from commercial buildings and schools, private schools that is. This year, in this term, the Bronx County Courthouse, which is the people's house in the Bronx, will be the first green roof on any government building. It's happening right here in the Bronx. Thank you.

A lot of people involved in that. Now you all know that education is our single most important investment, and we have some great leaders in this borough who have taken up the charge of leading the education of our children. One of them is about to retire, and I don't know if she's here. She didn't come. She has the flu? How dare she. I tell you, Irma Zadoya spent 34 years in public education. She just retired two days ago. 34 years of service.

And we have a replacement for Irma Zadoya, which you should meet today, a great education leader. Her name is Yvonne Torres, the new Region 1 superintendent. Thank you for being here, Yvonne. And her deputy, Askia Davis. Thank you, Askia, for being here.

I also want to say thank you to the Region 2 superintendent that has been doing a great job, Laura Rodriguez. Thank you, Laura. And I don't know if Peter Heaney is here, Peter Heaney from Region 9. There he is, from Region 9. Thank you, Peter.

In the area of education, we will continue to push with the legislature for the campaign for fiscal equity funding that needs to be brought to the city. And, by the way, I agree with the members of the legislature that we must lift the cap on the number of charter schools.

We must lift the cap on the number of charter schools. And I have to tell you, at the beginning of this process, and when I was in the City Council, I was very sceptical about charter schools, because I felt that they were simply a drop in the bucket, that we were fooling ourselves, that it was only a little tiny piece of a large puzzle, and I remember when Rudy was talking about it and he said, "You know, well, we're going to reach three thousand kids," and I said in a system of 1,100,000 kids, that's an insult." Well, now the charter schools are reaching hundreds of thousands of children around the city and transforming their lives. Whatever tools are at our disposal, we should use to raise our children's prospects for the future.

I want to reassure the president of the public university that, as a graduate of a public university, I am absolutely, unequivocally committed to continuing our aggressive investment in the institutions that serve this borough, and I want to recognize the presidents of the colleges, President Dolores Fernandez, who is here with us today. The president of Bronx Community College, Carolyn Williams. Dr. Williams, thank you for being here. And the president of Lehman College, Ricardo Fernandez, thank you for being here.

One of the not so new initiatives, but something that we're going to aggressively go after, and I asked the partnership of our elected officials when I first became Borough President, in the first 24 months, we put 38 portable science slabs in the schools, 38 of them. When you and I were growing up in the public school system here in the city, we had laboratories, we had workshops, we had wood shop and metal shop and all sorts of opportunity to work with our hands and discover material and matter and all that good stuff. We had real science labs. Unfortunately, those things are a thing of the past, and so we've come up with this crafty notion, this crafty idea of a portable science lab that gets rolled into the classroom. In the first four years, we were able to distribute and pay for fifty science laboratories in the Bronx, and today I want to publicly state that, working with our elected officials and their budgets, we will try to equip every single school that needs a portable science lab in the Bronx with a portable science lab. Our children have to be competitive.

Today I also want to invite housing developers to help us to build housing that is mixed and include housing and services for senior citizens. We need to be creative. And we will continue our large investment in services to senior citizens working with the new chair of the City's -- City Council's Committee on Aging, Council Member Maria del Carmen Arroyo. We will work with you and find the money to help to continue to support our senior centers. Last year's Bronx week was the most successful. More tourists are coming to the zoo and the garden. And you all know, because everybody keeps reminding me, that we've doubled the number of restaurants that show up in the Zagat Restaurant Survey in the last year. This year we've invited Tim Zagat and the New York Times food pages to come back to the Bronx, and we want to double again the number of restaurants that show up in the next Zagat Restaurant Survey so people will see the Bronx as a place of culture and opportunity and a place where you come for entertainment as well. We will do that, working with our business community.

And so let me close with this: I believe that we reap what we sow. And if you go back in the story, you see a place that was destitute, a place that had suffered, a place that appeared to be in despair. Not every neighborhood; let's be clear. The Bronx, as every other borough and every other city in the country, always had its enclaves of great neighborhoods, places of stability. It was a concentrated area, but it became a symbol of something about ourselves and our lives as Americans, of our government and its relationship to its people, and I argued at the inauguration that we must not as a people be defined by our circumstances. I sincerely believe that. I believe that you have to have a vision of transformation and renewal and revival that defies the conventions of the day.

So when I see young people hanging out around a high school or on a corner or on a stoop somewhere, as we used to call it, I don't see hoodlums, I don't see kids that are troubled; I see the

future of this country. And our responsibility is to figure out how, as a community of people who have been around the curve, to bring that generation with us and create a generation, a stronger generation, a generation of promise and opportunity and hope.

These are bigger things than what's immediately before us. We need to invest in them. We need to believe in them. We need to bring people together. We need to heal the divisions between the ethnicities and the races and the religions. We need to be a unified borough and a unified city. And the way we do that is not by talking about it simply. This is an opportunity to talk about it, but it is not simply by talking about it; it is by what we do.

And so let me leave you with this thought: If the past has taught us anything, is that every cause brings the effect, every action has a consequence. If a man plants melons, he will reap melons. If he sows beans, he will reap beans. And this is true of everyone's life: Good begets good, and evil leads to evil. True enough, the sun shines on the saint and the sinner alike, and too often it seems that the wicked prosper, but we can say with certainty that, with the individual, as with the nation, the flourishing of the wicked is simply an illusion, for, unceasingly, life keeps books on us all. In the end, we are all the sum total of our actions. Character cannot be counterfeited, nor can it be put on and cast off as if it were a garment to meet the whim of the moment.

Like the markings on wood, which are ingrained in the very heart of the tree, character requires time and nurturing for growth and development. Thus, also, day by day, we write our own destiny, for, inexorably, we become what we do.

Thank you all very much. God bless you. God bless the Bronx. And God bless the United States of America. Thank you.