



A New Beginning for Newark

Four years ago, Cory Booker lost the mayoral

race in Newark, N.J., to longtime incumbent Sharpe James, who had led the city for two decades. It was one of the bloodiest battles in political history. But it was just the beginning, however, for the Ivy League-educated lawyer and former city councilman who vowed to turnaround a city plagued with corruption, violence, a poor educational system and poverty.

Now Booker will have his chance. After overwhelmingly winning the mayoral race on May 9, the 37-year-old Rhodes Scholar will take office as Newark's new mayor on July 1. His challenges are many. Booker talked to The Crisis about his goals for Newark and how he plans to lead the predominately Black and Latino city in a 21st century world economy.

Forecast the first 100 days of your administration.

We're going to come out very aggressively on youth empowerment. And then we're going to emphasize safety and security. We've had about 19 murders in the last 19 months of young people — teenagers and younger. We can't see that continue in the city anymore. So, you're going to see me out in the streets more than they've ever seen a mayor. Then we're going to talk about economic empowerment, for our city and for minorities in particular. One of the first things we're going to do is a disparate impact study so we can start giving more minority set-asides to local companies that are in our city and are run by minorities. And finally, we've got to clean up City Hall. We're going to pass campaign finance reform and end pay-to-play in the city of Newark.

A lot of gaps need to be bridged. How do you do that without alienating anyone?

There's an old African saying, "Sticks in a bundle can't be broken." We have to bring all of our sticks together in the city. This will be about building bridges. It'll be about bringing people

together, generationally, cross-sector racially. I unequivocally and unhesitatingly assert that working together, there is no challenge we're facing that's bigger than the people of the city of Newark.

What will Newark look like in four years?

In four years, Newark will be a dramatically safer city. You will see economic activity within the minority community, and within the city as a whole, that you have not seen before. You're going to see a City Hall that demands respect from the people of the city of Newark. The test of great leadership is not doing things for folks; the test of great leadership is empowering people to do for themselves. So I think that Newark is going to feel a renewed sense of pride.

Tell me about the future of Black politics.

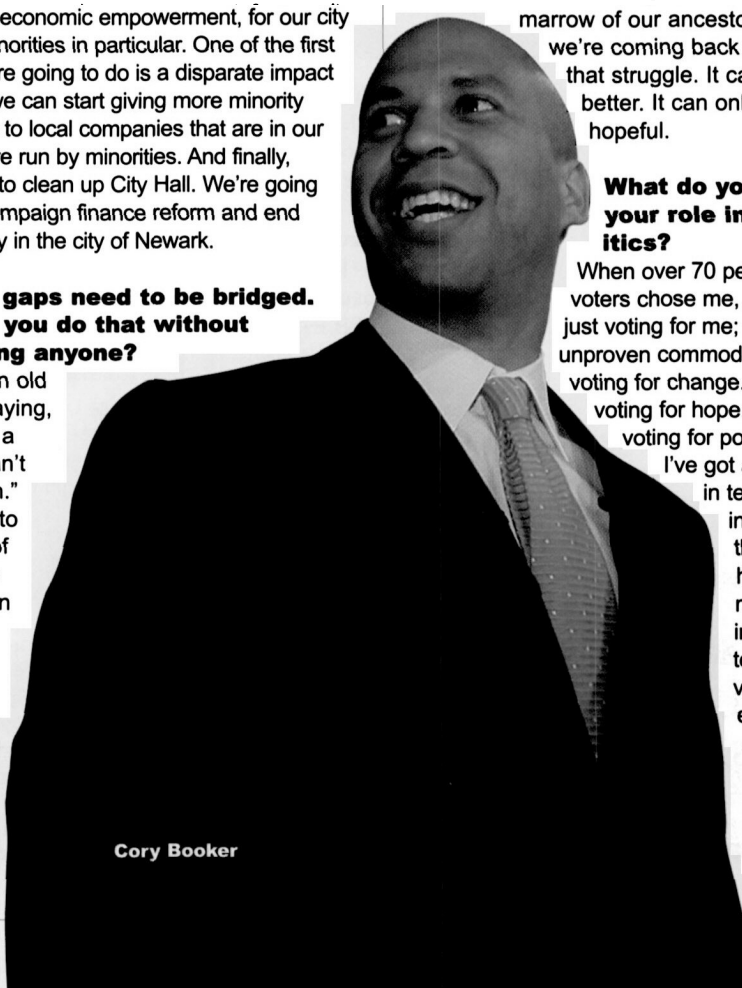
My grandfather was in tears when I graduated from law school, thinking he would never see a day where his [grand]child would be able to go to Yale Law School, telling me, "You have to never forget that this degree you're holding was paid for by the blood, sweat and tears of your ancestors." So I'm excited for this generation of leadership, because we have gotten opportunities that were borne from the fight, and the bone and marrow of our ancestors. So now we're coming back to continue that struggle. It can only get better. It can only get more hopeful.

What do you see as your role in Black politics?

When over 70 percent of the voters chose me, they weren't just voting for me; I'm an unproven commodity. They were voting for change. They were voting for hope. They were voting for possibility. And

I've got a lot to prove in terms of fulfilling the faith that people have placed in me and turning a short-term electoral victory into an enduring community victory.

—Interview by Todd Steven Burroughs



Cory Booker

TIM LARSEN/AP

IN BRIEF

BEST WORK OF FICTION

The New York Times Book Review named the novel *Beloved* (1987), by author Toni Morrison, the best work of American fiction of the last 25 years. The book won the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 1988.

SERIES CREATOR

Shonda Rhimes, the creator of *Grey's Anatomy*, signed a three-year \$10 million development deal with Touchstone Television. Rhimes is the first African American woman to create and executive produce an hour-long series that lasted longer than one season.

TONY AWARD WINNER

LaChanze won a Tony Award for best actress in a musical for her portrayal of Celie in the Broadway version of *The Color Purple*.

ROSE PARKS PARDON

Alabama Gov. Bob Riley signed the Rosa Parks Act, which authorizes a process to pardon Rosa Parks and other civil rights activists who were arrested for violating segregation-era laws.

DOCUMENTARY RETURNS

Eyes on the Prize, the award-winning documentary that chronicles the Civil Rights Movement, will return to television this fall after 13 years. More than \$900,000 was raised to get rights clearance for the two-part, 14-hour series.