

Thank you all for being here! My name is Henry Fernandez and I am running to be Mayor of the great city of New Haven Connecticut!

Let me tell you why I am running.

I have lived in New Haven for 23 years. I came here first to go to law school at Yale but quickly fell in love with the city, volunteering in the old Elm Haven public housing development as a student, and then joining with other New Haveners to form LEAP, one of the most amazing youth development programs in the country. I served as director of LEAP for 7 years and then went into City government, first as director of LCI, and then for 5 and a half years as the city's economic development administrator. For the last 7 years I have built my business here, but have worked around the country advising social justice movements and civil rights organizations. But none of that is why I am running.

I am running because my beautiful and brilliant wife Kica and I have an 8 year old son, little Henry. And we are raising him in our neighborhood of Fair Haven and as a student in the New Haven public schools. I am running because when I look into his eyes, I see the future. I see his future, and I also see the future of thousands of New Haven's children.

And while that future should be bright for all of New Haven's children. We are not there yet.

I am running because as I looked at New Haven, I had to be honest. While I love this city, it is a city divided.

There are many of us in this city who have the greatest education available in the world. There are others of us who attend schools that are failing our children.

There are many of us in this city who have never known the tension and fear that comes with crime. There are others of us who make every decision, every day, worried about keeping ourselves and our children safe or even just alive.

There are many of us in this city who are financially secure with a good job, savings for retirement and solid health insurance. There are others of us who work hard every day, yet don't make enough to make ends meet, take care of our children or pay for basic health care.

We have to have the courage to both be honest about this division and to believe that we have the ability to make a change.

It has been easy in our past for one part of the city to look at another part and not see the things that tie us together. We have even had politicians who have been willing to exploit the differences between us for votes or to raise money.

But we don't have to settle for any of this. We have the ability to change New Haven from a city divided into ONE CITY. We can be ONE CITY that embraces our racial diversity, and that welcomes immigrants from around the world.

We can be ONE CITY that fights together to be sure that we create high quality jobs that provide health care, good pay and dignity in retirement.

We can be ONE CITY that says that a high quality education is the right of every child, and that this is not just rhetoric, but reflects a willingness to tell the truth, make tough choices and dramatically improve our public schools.

We can be ONE CITY that says never again will accidents of birth, income, or the school lottery determine even before kindergarten whether a child will go to college 13 years later.

We can be ONE CITY that says it is morally wrong that my son, at the age of 8, has to see on a daily basis drug dealing and prostitution on the street outside our home. And not just my son, but all of our sons and daughters should never have to witness these things.

Instead, as One City we can together embrace community policing but also go much deeper and work TOGETHER to tackle the root causes of crime, ensuring that our children have safe high quality community centers in every neighborhood, and that those people coming out of prison are given every support and every chance to ensure they do not again commit crime.

We can tackle these problems but we can only do it as ONE CITY.

The good news is that we have a history of working together on tough problems. And in this room right here tonight are people who are a testament to our ability to solve our problems as One City.

Janna Wagner from All Our Kin is here. In fact she spoke earlier tonight. All Our Kin came about when a group of New Haveners recognized the challenge of creating both high quality day care options as well as ensuring livable wages and benefits for child care providers. They have trained hundreds of child care providers to provide better services to our children and changed the level of respect and pay that those providers get for their hard work on behalf of our children. All Our Kin is One City At Work.

I know a wonderful young man named Isaac who is here this evening. He is a student at Gateway Community College studying to be the first in his family to have a college degree. That our community college is downtown is the idea of One City at work. It reflects our shared commitment to affordable higher education for all and to ensuring that our residents will be continuously retrained to be able to get good jobs even as the economy and technology redefine the very nature of employment. I was proud of this effort and being able to lead it. And I am proud of Isaac for working hard and using Gateway to its full potential.

It was not easy for All Our Kin to change the way home based day care providers educated and engaged with children. Nor was it easy to bring Gateway downtown – I remember just how tough that was. And we should not expect our challenges to simply evaporate because we act as One City. But we will overcome our toughest challenges and in so doing we will ensure that our solutions actually serve the broadest number of residents. Working as One City requires that we all see our

shared humanity and dignity. That we can look at other people and see ourselves. That we can look at other people's children and see our own.

If we work as One City we can dramatically improve our schools. We will tackle the tough issues of failing schools and speak honestly and openly about what is working and what is not. We will create clear transparent school report cards which make data easy for all parents to understand so they can evaluate their own child's school. We will have a Mayor who will listen to teachers and parents but will also be willing to be held accountable for improving our schools. I promise you this evening that as your Mayor, and as the father of an eight year old in the New Haven Public Schools, I want you to hold me accountable.

If we work as One City we can embrace community policing but also be honest about how much crime permeates our social fabric. Let me explain what I mean with an example. We have a significant problem in New Haven with childhood obesity. A big part of the reason for this is that unlike when I was a kid, parents simply don't feel safe letting their kids walk or ride bikes with their friends to the local park in order to play tag or basketball or soccer. Until we talk with parents in specific neighborhoods and understand what they would need to feel safe sending their kids to the park, we will not solve childhood obesity.

In One City we see ourselves as attached to each other. That what benefits one of us, benefits all of us. That what makes one neighborhood stronger, makes all neighborhoods stronger. These things don't just sound good, they are true.

When we dramatically reduce crime and improve the schools in Fair Haven, the Hill, or Newhallville, we increase property values in those neighborhoods. But in doing so, we also stabilize and lower property taxes in neighborhoods like East Rock and Westville.

When we rebuild services for our seniors, we are respecting their service to New Haven. But we are also providing opportunities for seniors to act as mentors to our children, volunteers on boards and commissions, and as advocates for important issues like school reform, crime reduction, and immigrant rights. In One City we both respect our seniors' service and value their potential to make us stronger.

I am a huge believer in the arts as essential to the idea of One City. The arts build bridges between us and as we cross those bridges we learn that we are not so different from each other. That is why I worked so hard to bring major performers like Ray Charles and Vanessa Williams to the Green. Thousands of New Haveners of every background sat together to watch, listen and become one. In One City the arts are a tool to bring us together so we can see how much we share.

One City is both a vision and a challenge. It is a vision because it represents a new way of getting things done and comes with the promise of big and long lasting change. But it is a challenge because it requires that we take the first steps towards each other. But once we see ourselves in each other, there is no turning back. We

are then on the path to building the most vibrant city in America.

Dr. King said “everyone can be great because anyone can serve.” This evening I come seeking your service. If we are going to share One City, then we need a campaign also built on this simple but powerful idea. We need volunteers working with us in every neighborhood. We need to knock on thousands of doors and have thousands of conversations. But we cannot do this without you.

It is my hope that at this time, in this place you will join our movement. At this time, in this place, you will say we are going forward, not backward. At this time, in this place, you will decide that we can no longer be divided but must from now on be One City.

Thank you for joining us this evening.