

## The Invitation Still Stands



The Building  
Community Institute

4870 S. Lewis Avenue, Suite 203  
Tulsa, Oklahoma, 74105  
888-388-6348  
[www.cliffontaulbert.com](http://www.cliffontaulbert.com)

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As I write this February newsletter, I am fully aware of the transition that has taken place in our country. We have a new President. And I know that "Tomorrow" awaits him and all of us. However at the end of our day of hard work and thoughtful planning, we watch as the sun makes it way westward, bringing with it "time" to lay aside the stress of the day and focus on the next twenty-four hours-the new day we have not yet seen. We need such a reprieve to muster the strength, courage and creativity needed to keep moving our nation ahead. My Great-Grandpa Poppa Joe always looked forward to those new twenty-four hours with great expectation and in his insightful way would simply say to us around him, "Tomorrow is the best day because man ain't teched it yet." Tomorrow was his hope. Maybe it was the magic of getting ready for sleep-laying aside all the bluster of the day, taking off the tie, kicking off the high heeled shoes and seeing ourselves as mere human beings in need of rest, not titled professionals or elected officials, just another person along with billions of others, crawling into bed and remaining hopeful for the dawn of a new day. And today, just as it did for Poppa Joe, maybe our new day can give us and others the opportunity to be our better selves-to think unselfishly and to be reminded of the vision that should drive our actions and shape our plans and conversations.

Poppa Joe was right in so many ways about tomorrow. We all love that next day, but in truth, much of yesterday will awaken with us. While washing our faces, brushing our teeth and before the tie and the high heeled shoes, we must decide the best of yesterday to be carried forward and what of yesterday to be left behind. If we wait and get fully dressed in the uniforms that seek to define us, we might be less inclined to be courageous. As a nation, we are in need of a new day-one that reflects the best of us and is not encumbered by malice and greed. This is our home. We are the keepers of the ideal. Together, we must find ways to unleash the generosity of our hearts. Not unlike the observations of the English writer, Charles Dickens, for many of us, these are the worst of times. Rather than cocktail chatter about unprecedented growth, great expectations, and no deficits, our reference conversation is still the depression of the 1930's. Unemployment continues to reach unprecedented proportions. Our financial institutions are no longer viewed as bulwarks of trust, trying to regain their center along with our trust. Housing in America has fallen on very hard times. Our economy is in shambles by some standards. Our confidence in leadership has been shaken. Our incarceration rate is higher than any other nation and many of our youth need our guidance more than ever before. And all of this is happening while our world is still at war. But even so, there's still reason to remember Poppa's words about the magic of the next day. After all, this is still America, an incredible experiment in self-government, where personal opportunity and belief in tomorrow can flow freely. These realities will still determine the best of times. As a husband, dad and small business owner, I am somewhat apprehensive about tomorrow, but I am also drawn beyond our present economic circumstances to what Alexis de Tocqueville recognized nearly two hundred years ago-our ability to be led by a vision bigger than ourselves. And vision is all about tomorrow. Unselfish vision is so important. It has the power to reduce narcissistic mindsets. It reminds us of others, and our unique relationships as fellow humans. Unselfishness will have important and sustainable consequences for our nation and it has to start with leadership at all levels. And of course, Charles Dickens left us a clear picture of the immense impact of what can happen 'the day after the night' when one person chooses to unleash his or her generosity. Historically, America has been defined by the generosity of her heart; not our landmass, incredible infrastructure or marble statutes. Yes, our country is more than a place. It's an ideal, one that requires the confidence and participation of all to ensure that a nation so conceived and so dedicated long endure. President Abraham Lincoln posed a question and extended such an invitation to America over one hundred and forty-six years ago. The invitation still stands. Our collected confidence still matters! Our ideals braved the harshness of the Atlantic on our way to Jamestown, triumphed in a Revolutionary War, survived the Civil War, established an enviable world presence, emerged from the Great Depression and we continue to eradicate the scourge of slavery from our mantles. We are Americans. We will face tomorrow and survive, as each of us do our part to respond to the invitation so eloquently extended by President Abraham Lincoln. We are the endurance he sought then and the endurance we need today. Let's Talk...

- Clifton L. Taulbert