



## CITY OF DETROIT OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

Ellen Ha, Esq., CIG  
Inspector General

Kamau C. Marable, MA., CIG  
Deputy Inspector General

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### **Parting Statement from Detroit Inspector General Ellen Ha**

I am delighted that City Council unanimously voted to appoint Kamau Marable as the City's third Inspector General. I have gotten to know Mr. Marable well over the past six (6) years, as the Deputy for the office. As you may have heard during his heartfelt interview before Council, he is a true public servant. Born and raised in Detroit, and having spent most of his life here, his commitment to the City is unwavering. He has served the City in different capacities under several administrations and Councils, all the while making Detroit his home. More importantly, he fully understands what this position entails, yet he desires to continue to serve Detroit.

He is "made in Detroit" and, in my humble opinion, Detroit can't make anything better! As I prepare to exit and pass the torch onto Mr. Marable, I wish him all the best. As a representative of the City, in his capacity as the Inspector General, he will fight the fight and run the distance to bring Detroit's gold medal. Like the Olympians, he has been training for this moment and is now ready for the challenge. I am confident that he will give his best in making all Detroiters proud of the City that he so loves.

For now, as I catch myself in a nostalgic moment, please allow me to recount and replay some of the highlights of my last 6 years, as I remember them now.

I had a rough start in the beginning of my term. When my office initiated an investigation concerning a high-ranking City official, many questioned my integrity and ability to conduct an unbiased investigation. Apparently, having worked for the City for so long, the public had concerns whether I could lead the investigation without seeing the truth through "*la vie en rose*."

One late evening, I was visited by a city leader who inquired whether I would consider outsourcing the investigation to a third party. Outsourcing the investigation would have been an easy-out for me. I would not be so tortured in questioning the many people I have gotten to know over the years and with whom I have built bridges. For a fleeting second, it seemed wise to outsource the investigation, if anything, to allay the public's concerns.



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However, I dismissed the notion, as I saw the situation differently. I had just asked and was given the job as the inspector general to do just this and the City was paying me to do my job. I could not in good conscience steer away from my responsibility just because people were questioning my integrity. This job was not about me. This job was about delivering the truth, upholding honesty and preserving integrity. I was determined to deliver the truth, no matter what the truth may be.

I was disappointed to learn later that some people also misunderstood my intentions and believed that I was initiating the investigation to find fame in the public limelight. There was no win for me. In truth, personally, I had everything to lose and nothing to gain. But, for the City, this was a crucial moment. If done correctly, the City can win back the public's trust and continue to preserve its integrity. So, I made my choice.

My journey in the office was not without additional challenges. Some of the investigations conducted under my supervision were considered controversial. Some dealt with contractors who committed crimes against the City and would spend many years behind bars. I would be remiss if I did not admit that, at times, I began questioning the prospect of my own personal future and my own comfort level outside the office.

I learned that, as the inspector general, what is in the best interest of the public was not about how the City looked or protecting the City from potential liability. The public interest for the inspector general is to tell the truth and preserve the integrity of the City. However, often times, truth did not make the City look good. And, at times, demonstrating our ability to be honest meant that our investigations and audits could ultimately expose City to legal and financial liability. This was personally difficult for me, as prior to holding the position of inspector general, most of my life was spent defending the City from liability. This, also, was difficult for my former colleagues at the Law Department to understand and accept.

Perhaps the most unfortunate part of my term was when the dispute with my former bosses at the Law Department became public. I've often replayed the incidents in my head and each time, I came to the same conclusion - the collision in public was unavoidable under the circumstances. The dispute was genuine and seemed irreconcilable. In the end, this bridge, which I had so carefully built over the years, was also burnt in an instant amidst our heated debates.

Don't get me wrong here. My years in the office were not all froth with challenges and difficulties that resulted in my personal turmoil or in burnt bridges. If any sacrifices were required, I made them knowingly and willingly.

Sitting in this old familiar chair, I recall the many moments when I felt my staff and I added value to the City. Some of our investigations and audits prompted changes in the City's policies and procedures. Some of our investigations led to criminal charges against various individuals



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and contractors who were defrauding the City. We also worked with the prosecutors to seek restitution payments. One resulted in over \$4.7 million in restitution and the City has already received \$1.25 million. Another resulted in a letter of apology to a City agency. We've also secured a Stop Payment Order from the court, after learning the payments were wrongfully made to a person who was not entitled to any payment from the City.

While in the office, I received three (3) unsolicited potential job offers, which after much thought, I politely declined. I was determined to finish out my term. I made a commitment to this job and this City.

One of my proudest moments was when one of our investigators was appointed as the inspector general for the City of Columbus Police Review Board after a nationwide search. A national recruiter contacted me to look for possible candidates from our office. I was delighted to learn that Detroit Office of Inspector General was on the national radar.

In all my years of public service, I have never worked with staff who gave me such enduring support as the staff I now leave behind. I would be lying if I told you that I had no staffing issues, but in truth, without my staff, I could not have endured the volley of degradation hurled at me from time to time. Being a lawyer, I had no problem rolling up my sleeves and positioning myself for every fight to be had. My staff, however, would often intervene to cool my rising temperature. They reminded me to pick and choose my battles.

I shall miss my staff who believe in the mission of our office and work hard to achieve and meet the goals we set for the office. If you deem my tenure to have been successful, I owe it to them all. They held each other accountable, and they provided support to one another in doing their job. Most of all, they held me accountable to my duties and responsibilities and they propped me up when I felt I was spiraling down. I shall miss the weekly staff meetings, and the quarterly evaluation meetings, where we questioned and challenged each other to do our best work and where we ensured our expectations and goals were aligned. I shall miss the adrenaline of meeting our internal timeline together for the quarterly reports and the *Good Government* newsletters. Most of all, I shall miss the room where we all met and basically locked ourselves up for the day until we asked and answered the hard and the uncomfortable questions, all in our effort to finalize the report. I shall miss the heated and passionate, but always respectful discussions, where if you didn't know any better, we were having shouting matches and torturing each other, all in our effort to produce a balanced report. I shall miss the joys and tears we shed together through all our ups and downs.

As I look back, I am forever grateful for the opportunity that was afforded to me six (6) years ago. I thank you all for allowing me to do my job and having faith in the Office I serve. While I make no apology for the decisions I've made over the years, I now offer the following food for thought in the hopes that you can better understand the position I held.



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My job as the inspector general was never to be right, but to do right. It was my job to point out the bad and explain why or how something went amiss. And, at times, if feasible, I had a duty to provide guidance on how to redirect our course. It was not because I was all-knowing or that I knew better, but it was because my staff and I had the duty and the privilege to review and fully examine the situation that gave rise to the investigation or the audit. By nature, we do not have the luxury of reviewing what unfolds before us until it actually happens. Lastly, it is often easier to critique and suggest improvements after a paper is written and the story is told.

My job was never to make anything look good, but to show things as they were and if necessary, provide the impetus to change for the better. It was never about showcasing the positive or giving accolades to those who have given so much to the City. My job was to reveal the facts, even when the facts painted a negative image of our beloved City.

The inspector general has a duty to uphold the highest principle of what a government should be and apply those principles of an ideal government to real people who govern in the real world. The conundrum for me has been that I understand real people are not perfect; and the real world, in which we govern, is often less than ideal. However, I also believe we cannot aspire to be less than ideal or not do what should be done, when we can.

I am deeply appreciative and thankful for the experience I have gained over the years. Thus, I make my exit as a better person than I was six years ago. Truly, it has been an honor and privilege to hold this position. This was my journey, and this is my story.

They say when one door closes another will open. I am excited to report the door I will open next is at the Wayne County Department of Corporation Counsel. I will return to lawyering as the Chief Assistant Corporation Counsel in the Municipal Division.

As I exit and pass the torch on to Mr. Marable, I wish him all the courage and the strength you have given me in my six years. I am confident Mr. Marable will do well in filling this position. With your full support, he will well represent Detroit. He has had 12 years of training as a deputy. He is ready to fight and compete for that gold medal for the City. He will uphold honesty and integrity for the City for the next six years.

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