

Somebody, Nobody Sent
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Born at Ravenswood Hospital the last night of 1962, Chicago blood courses through my veins. So shall it be until my last breath. Chicago, the essence of America in urban form, provided my early education on all fronts. CPS classrooms provided the foundation, and the city provided all the rest.

A stunning lakefront. Trains and buses opening the entire city to a child. Parks and alleys, everywhere, to play in. Art beyond imagination guarded not by an admission fee, but stately lions. Levers and knobs to actually feel the kinetics of potential at the Museum of Science and Industry. As our nation was rocketing heroes into the heavens, my city muscled brawn and beauty ever higher into the sky. At the time, our only architectural competition on the planet ... was ourselves. But for the introduction to (and continuation of) heartbreak at 1060 West Addison, it was a glorious era.

Committed to repay the debt of social capital I owed the city that raised me, that ingrained values of personal industry and civic optimism within me, I embarked on a career of public service. I became a city manager.

The joke I tell to explain the trajectory of a professional life that did not end at 121 North LaSalle is ... my last name wasn't Daley. But it is only partially a joke. The unfunny part is the \$8.3 billion a year enterprise that is the City of Chicago is not operated like any major business within it. There is no trained, experienced CEO at the helm, responsible for performance and reporting to a Chairman (Mayor) and Board of Directors (City Council). There is no separation of politics and administration. There is no professional code of ethics at the pinnacle of administration, setting the standard for every employee. Politics is everything. Everything is politics. We don't want nobody, nobody sent.

Thus my beloved and bountiful hometown has languished. It is not yet Detroit. But it is not far behind. The balkanization of neighborhoods that long served political ends has wrought social disintegration, intergenerational poverty and violence on par with war zones. The pilfering of the public treasury converts debt for many into wealth for few. The ransacking of the public trust has caused corporations and civic leaders to flee (typically to communities with city managers). Most tragically, this ransacking has left a city for children wholly unlike the place that literally and metaphorically gave me life. Tourists may still marvel at the well-scrubbed parts now on borrowed time, but the life-

changing optimism that was every Chicago child's birthright has perished in vast swaths across the city, replaced by hopelessness and fatalism.

There is much work ahead. Hard work. Honest work. Dangerous work. Work that can, honestly, only be done by somebody nobody sent. A city manager, hired solely for their capabilities, and retained solely for their performance.

The city manager form of government has become the most popular form of city government in America. Chicago is surrounded by well-run, safe cities that have prospered with professional city management supporting ethical, open and efficient governance. As the city manager form of government celebrates its one hundredth birthday this year, one wonders if another hundred years of heartbreak at Wrigley Field will pass before Chicago citizens and business leaders demand reform in the structure of their government.

With no job for a city management professional in my birthplace, I long ago lit out for the territories. Davenport, Iowa, where I now man a post, is a year older than Chicago, and has a similar transportation and manufacturing past. We have a stunning waterfront of our own, a world-class art museum, a national treasure ballpark and a largely interchangeable history of architects, colorful politicians and last names. The skyscrapers are not quite as tall, but the taxes are low, the schools are incredible and we need to remind people to lock their doors. We're the only city in America with fully accredited police, fire, EMS, public works, parks and library departments. It's a spectacular place to raise a family or grow a business. And it's a place where professional city management is expected.

Make no small plans. Make no inefficient, ineffective, inept or corrupt plans either. Provide Chicago with the transformative power of professional city management and watch it remake itself once again.

Craig Malin
Chicagoan,
Davenport City Administrator