Good morning everyone. My name is LaWana Mayfield and I represent District 3 on the Charlotte City Council.

I am so proud to join you today for the continuation of our historic movement to recognize the contributions of women everywhere. Standing here this morning, I can feel the energy coming from this group. There is an undeniable power that resonates when ‘huddled masses’ come together in solidarity toward a common goal.

Throughout our history, we have seen it over and over again. From the fight over Women’s Suffrage and those who secured the 19th Amendment allowing women to vote... to the lasting struggle for civil rights for Americans of all ethnicities... and even the fight of the LGBTQ community for equal rights. We have witnessed what dedicated groups can do when motivated. We’ve seen their successes and we have learned from them. That is why we are out here this morning... to make our own mark on society... by proving our value and demonstrating our strength.

A woman’s place was once considered in the kitchen. That’s where they thought we were most valuable. But then, something happened. Women began proving their worth in the world of industry and we have World War II to thank for that. Thousands of women, in the spirit of Rosie the Riveter, pushed out into our factories and shipyards... and they made a difference. It opened the door for women to creep slowly into the business sector... into roles of leadership, where women excelled.
So we made the jump from the kitchen... to the boardroom. Now, there is another mountain to climb. We must advance our movement to the next logical step. We need more women in elected office! I will say that again... WE NEED MORE WOMEN IN ELECTED OFFICE. It is time for progressive thought and diverse representation in all areas of our government. It is the only way we will ever truly make the right decisions for every person.

The tide is pushing in our favor. Last November, the wave of political change swept across our country... with dozens of new women winning their political races. Did you know that Congress has 106 women? There are only 22 in the Senate and 84 in the House... with only 25.3% of women as state legislators. Yet, we make up more than half of the population. Thanks to the 2017 elections, 202 municipal officials, including our very own Mayor Vi Lyles were elected to office.

I am encouraged to see an increase in the number of women of color winning mayoral elections all over the South. New Orleans, Atlanta, Charlottesville, Virginia... and Shreveport, Louisiana have all elected black women to lead their cities.

I am also encouraged to learn that 80 women are in the process of running for the Governor of their state later this year. And, we are seeing record numbers of women inspired to seek political office. Since the 2016 election, 26,000 women have signed up at Emily’s List, looking for information and advice for how to run. You heard me right, 26,000 women, myself included... have contacted or been contacted by Emily’s List.

So we are headed in the right direction... but there is a long way still to go. Together, we can turn this flow of positive movement into a tidal
wave of results. It takes all of us working together to get to the outcome we deserve.

The theme of this year’s rally is… Power to the Polls. We see the power right here. It is all around us. This is what power looks like. But it means nothing if we don’t follow it up with action… and we have the opportunity to do that at this year’s primaries and general elections.

I am calling on all of you today… to get out and vote for the candidates that best represent your progressive views. You don’t need to wait for the elections to start making a difference. Get out now and register to vote… and help us to convince all women to do the same. Volunteer on a campaign, host a fundraiser, talk to your family and friends.

This rally today…is the start of a national voter registration and mobilization campaign. Let’s get every woman in America registered to vote… and then we can really put our power on display.

I am so excited to see this many forward-thinking people out here today… and I am especially excited to see how we can work for change in the future. Thank you for allowing me to join you this afternoon… and let’s have a wonderful march!

Power to the Polls!