

First African-American mayor is a milestone for Montgomery, Alabama

Required Annotations	Student-Created Annotations	Summary / Questions / Reflection
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Student-created

Required (bold)

In a vote that made history, people in Montgomery, Alabama, elected Steven Reed on October 8. He is the first African-American mayor in the city's 200 years.

Reed was already Montgomery County's first black probate judge. He is 45 years old. He defeated David Woods, owner of the local Fox TV station, in the election.

"This election has never been about me," Reed said in his victory speech. "This election has never been about just my ideas. It's been about all of the hopes and dreams that we have as individuals and collectively in this city." He said it's also about "the way we found the opportunity to improve outcomes regardless of neighborhood, regardless of zip code, regardless of anything that may divide us or make us different from one another."

Many celebrated his victory in a city known for different roles in history. Montgomery, where about 60 percent of residents are black, was the first capital of the Confederate States of America. It was a **stronghold** of racial violence and discrimination during the Jim Crow era. Later it was known for protests to win rights for African-Americans in the civil rights era.

Rosa Parks And The Voting Rights March

It's home to the bus boycott against segregation led by Rosa Parks. In 1955, Parks' refusal as a black woman to give up her seat on a segregated bus sparked a boycott. Later, the Supreme Court ruled that buses had to be integrated.

Martin Luther King Jr. led marches for voting rights from Selma to Montgomery. In Montgomery, after the third march in March 1965, King addressed a crowd of 25,000 people on the steps of the Alabama Capitol. He famously said, "The **arc** of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice."

"This is a historic day for our nation," Karen Baynes-Dunning said on October 8, on Twitter. She is a leader at the Southern Poverty Law Center in Montgomery. "The election of Steven Reed, the first black mayor of Montgomery, Alabama, symbolizes the new inclusive and forward-thinking South that so many have worked to achieve."

The Montgomery Advertiser published an opinion piece about Reed's win. Bro Krift is the editor. He described the victory as being "for the thousands of civil rights foot soldiers whose names we rarely say but whose legacy lives forever."

"Do not underestimate what this means to generations of people who fought hard for the man who looks like Reed to hold the city's highest office," Krift wrote. He noted "what it means to parents of the youth of this city who look like Reed and who now have a man they can hold up as an example."

Youngest — And First — Black Probate Judge

Reed was born and raised in Montgomery. He worked various jobs in finance and in the Alabama government before turning to local government in Montgomery. Reed became the youngest and first black **probate** judge in Montgomery County in 2012. He was the first probate judge in the state to issue same-sex marriage licenses in 2015.

The father of two told the Advertiser earlier in 2019 that he decided to run for mayor after becoming unhappy with the state of public education and safety. He decided he didn't need to look to anyone else to fix the problems but himself.

Reed thought it would be better to make a difference than to "sit on the sidelines"

and complain," he said.

Following In Father's Footsteps

His rise in politics, in some ways, follows in the footsteps of his father, a politician and civil rights advocate in Montgomery. Joe L. Reed was elected to the Montgomery City Council in 1975 along with three other African- Americans. They were the first black politicians to hold elected office in the city since the 1870s, noted in the book "Closed Ranks: The Whitehurst Case in Post-Civil Rights Montgomery."

At the time of Joe Reed's election, he was fighting for civil rights. As a student at Alabama State College, he participated in lunch counter sit-ins in 1960, fighting to end segregation in Montgomery. He went on to become a leader in the Alabama Democratic Conference, successfully suing over **gerrymandering** that limited black voting. He served on the city council until 1999 and was known to spar with Mayor Emory Folmar. The mayor was described in a 1987 Chicago Tribune report as "the most popular and efficient mayor in Montgomery's history and reviled as its most racist."

Folmar was the longest-serving Montgomery mayor, with 22 years. He took office in 1977 after the fatal police shooting of a fleeing, unarmed black man, who was mistaken for a robbery suspect. The case would affect the black community's relationship with police for years to come. "Rather than take steps to identify and correct the problem, it seems that Folmar's actions made things worse," the Journal of the Southern Regional Council said in 1983. Folmar left office in 1999.

On the night of October 8, Steven Reed did not address his position as the city's first black mayor. However, he acknowledged its significance earlier, speaking to the Advertiser.

Reed sees it as a serious responsibility. He knows what it "means to so many people who have been a part of Montgomery who have lived here and left here because of the racial terror they **underwent** and moved far, far away," he said. "And what it means to the people who stayed here and continue to chip away and who definitely want to see someone in this position that looks like them."

Questions

- Which section from the article BEST explains why Steven Reed's election has historical significance to the city of Montgomery?
 - Introduction [paragraphs 1-4]
 - "Rosa Parks And The Voting Rights March"
 - "Youngest--And First--Black Probate Judge"
 - "Following In Father's Footsteps"
 - Read the following selection from the section "Youngest — And First — Black Probate Judge." *The father of two told the Advertiser earlier in 2019 that he decided to run for mayor after becoming unhappy with the state of public education and safety. He decided he didn't need to look to anyone else to fix the problems but himself.* What conclusion is BEST supported by the selection above?
 - Reed became a probate judge so he could later run for mayor.
 - Reed hopes to have more children one day.
 - Reed does not feel safe living in Montgomery.
 - Reed was influenced by his children's experiences in school.
 - Which of the following MOST influenced Steven Reed's early involvement in politics?
 - his father
 - Rosa Parks
 - Martin Luther King Jr.
 - the owner of a local TV station
 - According to the article, why did Reed decide to run for mayor of Montgomery, Alabama?
 - He was asked to run for mayor by the editor of the Montgomery Advertiser.
 - He wanted have an active role in fixing the problems he saw in Montgomery.
 - He thought it was time for Montgomery to have a black mayor.
 - He had to run for mayor because his job as Montgomery County judge had ended.
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