

A C Wharton

A C Wharton is no ordinary Memphis Mayor. Elected last year with 60 percent of the vote, Mayor Wharton has been described as having “a small-town charm with a big-city edge who finds himself equally at home in neighborhood barber shops and corporate boardrooms.”

The popularity of this Lebanon, Tennessee, native can be traced to his ability to bridge the many divides that define politics in Memphis—between the abject poor and its Fortune 500 companies, between the city and its suburbs, between black and white.

He is known for his accomplishments in the areas of economic issues, ethics reform, public safety, children’s issues, government transparency and accountability, and smart growth. Above all, he possesses common sense and an even temperament in all situations. He has said that “everyone wants a sense of worth, even your worst enemy.”

A C Wharton is an honors graduate of both Tennessee State University and the University of Mississippi Law School, where he served as an adjunct professor for 25 years. Early in his career, he was an investigator for the Equal Opportunity Employment Commission in Washington, D.C., and an attorney for the Lawyer’s Committee for Civil Rights Under Law. Eventually, he and his wife Ruby, with whom he has raised six sons, formed the Wharton and Wharton law firm.

Mayor Wharton previously served as mayor of Shelby County, Tennessee, and as head of the Shelby County Office of the Public Defender. Beginning with his work as Public Defender more than twenty years ago, Mayor Wharton has provided learning opportunities for Rhodes student interns and continues to do so today.

For his honorable service to the citizens of Memphis and Shelby County, Tennessee, for his fair hand, and for reflecting the passion for learning, leadership and civic engagement we aspire to instill in all Rhodes graduates, I am pleased to award Mayor A C Wharton the degree of Doctor of Humanities, *honoris causa*.

William E. Troutt, President
May 15, 2010