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**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO DELIVERS REMARKS AT THE NATIONAL
CLERGY GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION SUMMIT**

Mayor Bill de Blasio: All right. We're getting used to these new ways of gathering. Pastor Monroe, thank you, and I'm very moved to be here with all of you and to just be a part of a group of people who really care I'm making an impact. So, I want to talk about Pastor Monroe and the God Squad, but first, a thank you to everyone. By gathering – everyone who's gathering here is taking a stand against gun violence. Everyone who is participating today is part of change and part of the solution. I just thank you because there's an intentionality of even being a part of this conference that gives me hope, and a special thank you to Pastor [inaudible] for a really powerful opening prayer and Pastor Monroe, we have been shoulder to shoulder a long time. I want to thank you for your amazing leadership. I've seen it. I witnessed that. Probably a lot of people on this conference have seen you in action. I've had the honor of seeing you in action in the community, the incredible positive impact you make personally, and the whole God Squad makes. I have seen you out there and literally personally stopping violence and discord of putting yourself on the line with so many of your colleagues. It is sacred work and you have provided a powerful model of the role that clergy can play as leaders of peace, and obviously a powerful model of what the Cure Violence movement and the Crisis Management System means, and this is the future. I want to really make clear what you've seen here with the God Squad is the future of creating a more peaceful society and stopping gun violence.

The best solutions will be the most grassroots solutions, the ones that truly engaged community leadership and that have faith leadership front and center. This is the way forward, and I just want to be very quick. I know everyone has a lot to cover, so I just want to offer a moment of just reflecting on what I've seen. Look, I think government has to support the grassroots, and I think we should demand that in every corner of this country. The investments we have made in the Crisis Management System, Cure Violence movement, some of the best resources we have ever spent in this city, some of the biggest impact in terms of stopping violence. The investments we've made in working with faith communities and upholding the role of faith communities have been swung the smartest investments we've made. The work that we do in public safety historically too often, there was a stereotype that public safety emanated from an individual with a uniform and a weapon, and I think now we understand that public safety has many, many elements, and in many ways, the element that is irreplaceable is the grassroots, the personal, the community piece, the piece that is truly authentic and believable to members of the community.

So, this is the way forward to rebalance the equation, which is actually why in New York City, we have been moving more and more resources into the Crisis Management System, Cure Violence movement. We've been moving resources away from traditional policing and into

youth programs. We still need traditional policing, but it has to be a different kind of traditional policing that is more responsive to communities, more respectful, more representative of communities. I think that if we make that combination of focus on Cure Violence, a focus on youth and a different kind of policing like our neighborhood policing model here, we can make a huge, huge difference.

The last thing I want to say is about the question of not just faith, but trust. I had a press conference this morning and the topic came up of a vaccine that we will eventually have to fight back the coronavirus, and the journalist said to me, well, we could have a vaccine and it could be a proven vaccine, but so many people are not going to be willing to take it because they don't have faith in their government. And I said to the journalist that there's truth in that statement, I'm sorry to have to acknowledge there was truth, but the reality is not to throw up our hands and walk away because unfortunately we live in a time where mistrust has been sewn by particularly leaders in Washington, and it's not to walk away because we've been through such pain in this coronavirus crisis and there's so much fragmentation, and ungluing of the things we knew. That's not when leaders walk away, that's when leaders double down. So everyone here is a leader. Everyone here is a difference maker, and I want to ask you to dig deep and restore trust, and I don't think there's anyone better than people of faith and true community leaders who can be the agents of restoring that trust. I think trust re-grows from the ground up. It's going to be a long time perhaps before people trust everything they hear from Washington D.C., but they share a can trust what they hear you, and if there's any place they're likely to turn where they're going to have faith, it will be to you.

So whether you're someone here in New York City or another part of the country, I want to say to you, you are the agents of the rebirth. There will be a rebirth. We will come out of this crisis. We will move forward. But the crisis is not just a physical one. It's not just about the disease or the economy. It's a crisis of trust that has to be overcome person by person and moment by moment, and I have seen it with my own eyes. I've seen moments that looked impossible and I saw, and I know Pastor Monroe will attest to this – moments that he and I were out together that looked like conflict was inevitable and yet true voices rang through and people heard, and there was enough trust in that moment to back away from conflict and find a path together. I know we can do that again, and every time we do it, it starts some momentum towards something better.

So thank you everyone. Thank you for all you do. Thank you for this gathering, which I know will start more and more of that positive momentum, and thank you, and remember every single time you do your work, you have the potential to save a life. On any given day, you could have a life and that there is nothing more valuable, nothing more powerful, and I praise you and thank you for all you do.

My dear friend Pastor Monroe. I'll be here for you every day, always, because I honor you and the God Squad. And whenever you need me, you know, I am just a text away. And, you know, you're a good texter.

[Laughter]

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