

THE CITY OF NEW YORK
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TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO APPEARS LIVE ON HOT 97

Ebro Darden: ... like that famous strand of weed, you know, the New York State strand of weed –

Peter Rosenberg: Is there one –

Laura Stylez: I think it's going to come. I think so.

Darden: Because everybody knows California has the best weed –

Rosenberg: But it's not like they have one strand. They're California, they have mad strands –

Darden: Let's go to the Mayor of New York City and ask him about weed. It's legal now. And he's on his way out of office. Mayor Bill de Blasio is on the program.

[Applause]

De Blaz, what's going on?

Stylez: Yay, Mayor –

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Good morning, Ebro. Good morning, everyone. Hey, before we get started, I just want to give you guys some real appreciation because you keep doing great things in this world. And I'm going to actually show some love to Rosenberg today.

Rosenberg: Okay –

Mayor: Special moment, Rosenberg. You've got a new album.

Rosenberg: Wow.

Mayor: I'm proud of you.

Rosenberg: Wow.

Mayor: I'm happy for you. I want to comment on it because I've been offering a lot of opinions lately. I want to comment on it –

Rosenberg: Okay –

Mayor: [Inaudible] because before I make any public comment, I need to check with an advisor. [inaudible] mine. I've got to make a call to Nicki Minaj and ask her if –

Rosenberg: Wow.

Darden: Wow.

[Laughter]

Mayor: And ask her if it's real Hip Hop, and then I'll let you know what I'm feeling [inaudible] –

Darden: De Blaz, de Blaz, see, I thought you were trying to – I thought you were really trying to, like, get us – you know what I mean – warmed up.

Rosenberg: Wow.

Darden: I didn't know you was going to take an underhanded swipe at Rosenberg.

[Laughter]

Rosenberg: I thought he was going to show real love to the album. And it was all a setup for the Nicki Minaj joke. Mayor, how dare – you know what, Mayor? I got a question for you. Let me ask you, I appreciate you mentioned my album, “Real Late,” which is streaming everywhere, but I have a question for you, Mayor. How many bites does it take for you to actually get through one French fry, my guy?

[Laughter]

Just three bites, and you were still holding French fry.

Mayor: Rosenberg, have you tried to do a live press conference while eating French fries? Have you tried to do that?

Rosenberg: So, is that – oh, so if you ate too much, you wouldn't be able to talk, you felt?

Mayor: I had to explain to people how important it was to get vaccinated while eating breakfast. I mean, that takes dexterity.

[Laughter]

Stylez: But, Mayor, what's the deal? I mean –

Darden: Get him, Laura. This is looking crazy out here –

Stylez: Is burgers and pizza and offering French fries – is it, you really think it's working to get people to get vaccinated?

Mayor: I think it got a hell of a lot of attention –

[Laughter]

[Inaudible] why they need to get vaccinated and that we had all sorts of incentives for them. Look, there's hundreds of thousands of people who are willing to get vaccinated but just haven't quite gotten there, haven't gotten around to it. So, incentives get people's focus. You know, they get them attention, they get – they make people want to do things. Of course, incentives work.

Darden: Well, look, we do it to get listeners. We give away Summer Jams and the whole thing. So, we know incentives definitely work.

Mayor: [Inaudible] –

Rosenberg: I got to tell you, Mayor de Blasio, you're not the first politician to celebrate these foods –

Donald Trump: We have peaches. We have 300 hamburgers, many, many French fries.

Darden: Wow, you and Trump have something in common. You stole this from Trump, you stole this from Trump.

Mayor: Rosenberg, I didn't know you played dirty –

[Laughter]

[Inaudible] little joke, a little historical reference. And then you go all Trump? You know, that's like –

Darden: That's dirty –

Mayor: [Inaudible]

Rosenberg: No, that's terrible. That's dirty.

Mayor: It escalated –

Rosenberg: That was a joke, that was a joke. But in all seriousness, Mayor, you do seem like you have a sort of a don't-give-a-bleep attitude on your way out the door. Like, you don't seem stressed and weighed down. You're aware that there are people who like you, there are people who don't like you, the book's been written. Do you feel any sort of excitement –

Darden: Relief –

Rosenberg: Yeah, and relief that, like, the story has been told, you're now just going to do your best to lead and make your way into civilian life.

Mayor: Yeah, there's some of that, but I think it is a couple of really simple things. I think the most important thing that's energized me, honestly – you go around the city, the city is coming back, like beyond anyone's expectations, faster, more intense, more beautiful, more vibrant. That's giving me a lot of joy and a lot of energy. That's the number one thing. There's, like, a camaraderie, there's a spirit. But the other thing is sort of over time, you just learn to be yourself. And I think one thing when you're in a position where you're always having to be on and always say the right thing, sometimes you can get a little tight. I certainly allowed myself to get a little too tight. I think it's just better to be yourself, maybe be a little more open. And I'm glad – hey, better late than never, right?

Darden: Right. Yeah. Well, I mean, you know, when you're in the thick of things, you know, and also, I think it should be noted, you know, we're coming out of a pandemic, we're coming out of dealing with mass death. You know, you were on TV every day, counting dead bodies. So, there's definitely some relief here – you know what I mean – to getting to this moment in history where, I mean, now we're at the point where 70 percent of the State of New York has at least one COVID vaccine shot. I think we're at about 50 percent that have two, correct?

Mayor: Well, I can tell you in the city right now, we've got 4.4 million New Yorkers with at least one dose. So, that's about 54 percent of the city has at least one dose. Almost everyone who gets one dose ends up getting the second one. So – and that keeps growing every day.

Darden: Let's talk about the rules here, because I'm concerned that this – today, you know, you look on the cover of the Daily News. It's, like, 'It's Over' and there's, like, a mask with the – crossing out the mask on the cover. We already had people who were kind of, you know, being overly dramatic about wearing a mask anyway, causing some problems, you know, violence, whatever, whatever. Are you concerned that there's not a clear rule here with regard to wearing a mask after today?

Mayor: I think we got to keep communicating with people. The fact is there's going to be places where we still want masks to be worn – schools, for example, mass transit, where people are really close together and in an enclosed space, hospitals, obviously. So, there's still places. And I think it's going to take communication. I'll tell you something, the vast majority of New Yorkers, when we said it was important to wear a mask, they did, and I think people are mature enough that if you say, okay, you don't have to in general now, but here's places where you should. And if a specific business, for example, or a cultural institution or someplace says, we want people to

wear a mask as part of coming in here, they can do that. They can set rules that work for them. So, I think it's going to be something that people work through. I'll also tell you, I think a lot of people are going to choose to wear masks in many settings, certainly for the rest of this year, just out of general caution, especially unvaccinated folks.

Darden: Let's talk Juneteenth, man.

Mayor: Yes –

Darden: This Saturday – and your administration and the entire City have worked together to put together an amazing set of programs and support the programs that were already taking place around the city for Juneteenth. Talk about – I mean, we've had you on and talked about the actual holiday, which is a City holiday and the State holiday, Juneteenth, for the first time this year. Talk about how we got to this point. Talk about how important the day is and what's going on with your administration.

Mayor: I think everything that we went through and learned together through last year has been leading people to look at history differently, to think about our country and our city differently. We're going to be celebrating Juneteenth. It has not historically been something that New Yorkers focused on a lot. It's time for people to focus on it. And you and I were together at Kwanzaa, and we're going to be doing a big thing on Kwanzaa again in December to focus people on that very beautiful, powerful, message-filled holiday. But Juneteenth is about obviously literally the celebration of emancipation at the end of the Civil War, but it is much more, to me, an opportunity to examine what emancipation was and wasn't, and the fact that we're still working on emancipation and actual equality in this country.

We are going to kick off Juneteenth on Friday at 6:00 PM in St. Nicholas Park on the James Baldwin Lawn. We're going to have artists, performers, music, a whole host of things to get this incredibly meaningful holiday going. You can go to nyc.gov/juneteenth for details. And then as you said, Ebro on Saturday, all over the city, different community events. And I think it's going to be a really positive time for people to think about what we need to do together to build community and to take us the next step toward inequality.

Darden: I want all white people and non-Black people to thank Black people on Juneteenth. I want an outpouring of, “Thank you, Black people.” Is that too much to ask? I mean, I haven't even gotten to the victim's compensation fund, but you know, a nice – you know, de Blaz, you know, you got – you got a little bit of budget left. I'm sure, I know where – I know we're already, you know, the budget is a mess, but spend a couple of dollars and do one of those posters in like the Daily News, you know, where people could pull out the foldout and it says, “Thank you, Black people.” And people could put it up in their windows. You know what I'm saying? All around the city. That would feel good. What do you think, de Blaz?

Mayor: Ebro, you're a creative genius, but I think – beyond your poster idea, I think your point is powerful. It's not just, thank someone walking by, it is recognizing the impact of African-Americans on America, on our history. There's no America without that contribution, it has been underseen, underestimated, airbrushed out in so many cases. This is a time to set things right, and

say, you know, we're the greatest nation in the world, that's because African-Americans helped build and create everything that we have. And, you know, it is a thanks, but it's a profound thanks, it's a historical thanks. And it's actually giving people their rightful place in history.

Rosenberg: Well, let's be honest, Black people did everything, white people helped.

Darden: Talk to 'em –

Rosenberg: White people were like, grab a shovel, all right, fine, we'll jump in at the end. But I mean, this country was – you said it right, Mayor, and we're still fighting, it seems like, for people to appreciate that this is the case. Let me ask you, as a fellow white person who gets it, why is it so hard for white people to acknowledge that racism is real and integral to the foundation of this country?

Mayor: I think it is getting easier, which is really important. And I say easier, not because it should ever be easy or light or, you know, frivolous, but I think we needed to go through, you know, really intense, painful conversations and moments to recognize that you got to say it out loud. There's structural racism all over this country, all over our institutions. This is why we formed the Racial Justice Commission to literally identify where structural racism exists in New York City government, in New York City cultural institutions, businesses, you name it, and weed it out and set the changes in place to make a different city, a different society. I think this has been a cathartic time, these last few years, where people can say out loud what we all should have been able to say a long time ago, that we're plagued by systemic racism and we can't be whole, we can't be a positive society unless we identify it and eradicate it. So, I actually think for the first time in my life, we've started to turn that corner.

Darden: Yeah, it definitely, you know, it's – I think as someone who was brought up celebrating Juneteenth, you know, it was a – almost like family day, right? It was, you gather with family, cookout, park, all that. I never really thought that America as a country would acknowledge Juneteenth. It just wasn't even, it didn't cross – and even that, think about that, the fact that as a citizen, your brain doesn't even go, yo, they should, you almost, what's it called? You accept in many ways that your contribution, the contribution of your ancestors, just, like, that's how it was. I was like, man, never. And here we are today, the Senate unanimously passed it to be a holiday. What's going on in New York City this year. Amazing. The House is supposed to work on it, I think, today, correct, de Blasio, on a federal level?

Mayor: I think we're going to get there.

Darden: And then, you know, they need to tweet out or say something publicly like, send us your Cash App, we're going to get you that money that we owe y'all, you know what I'm saying? Like in short order, let's get to this victims' compensation fund. See, I'm not saying reparations. I think Black people – we say reparations, people get all jittery.

Rosenberg: Yeah. It's true.

Darden: Victims' compensation fund. Because there's precedent for a victims' compensation fund. They know how to set that up. We know they know how to do that already. De Blasio, how do you feel about descendants of slaves in America being compensated?

Mayor: So, first of all, I want to say, Ebro, you know, your powerful eloquence with the phrase, you know, it really moved my heart, "Send us your Cash App" –

[Laughter]

Darden: PayPal, Venmo is all [inaudible] –

Mayor: Yeah. Really captured the spirit. No, look, I think we got to structurally change things. I think there's a very real question of what's the best way to do that. And now we're going to be having a national discussion, which the Biden administration has embraced, to figure out the best way to make things right, make them more right at least. I think there's a real question about what will help people the most. I will give you an example that's near and dear to my heart. And, you know it. I think, for example, providing free early childhood education to every child is particularly powerful. You couldn't do that by just giving people, you know, a one-off check. I do think we have to ask about structural investments that change the lives of families long-term. But, of course, we also have to ask about direct compensation and figure out what the balance between the two should be.

Darden: De Blaz, ranked choice voting is going on in the city, early voting has started, have you voted?

Mayor: I am going to vote on Election Day and it's going to be my last Election Day as mayor. So, I'm going to do it the traditional style, but I do want to urge all your listeners, early voting is going on this week. It's a great opportunity to get in there and decide the future of New York City. That's more convenient [inaudible] a lot of people, than on Election Day itself, June 22nd. But here's the most important thing, ranked choice voting. And we were talking about pizza – or fries earlier, but pizza is what I used as the example to teach New Yorkers ranked choice voting.

Darden: We saw – I saw your competition on NY1. That actually is what got me going, like, wait, we're burgers and it was fries, now we're doing pizza. What's going on, man?

Mayor: Because pizza is a great teaching tool, Ebro. See, you don't realize –

Darden: I did not –

Rosenberg: So, what were the pizza – how did the ranked choice voting for pizza work?

Stylez: Break it down.

Mayor: So, here's the cool thing because it helped really show people – everyone, you know, it's not hard to ask a New Yorker what your favorite pizza topping is and which one would you eat, which would you never eat, and all that. So, we used that as a tool to save people in the real

election for mayor and for all the other offices, you get five choices, and you rank them one to five. And if your first choice succeeds, that's great. But if they don't, your vote stays alive. And if your first place candidate falls off and doesn't have enough votes, your second vote then stays alive and moves to someone else. So, this is a way to magnify your vote and your power. So, we use the pizza contest to say, okay, can you rank five toppings? Well, everyone can rank five toppings, in order of preference. I do want you to go see this – nyc.gov/pizzavote. It's really fascinating because you see, they show – there's literally a graphic that shows you moving up the chain as one candidate –

Darden: He's glowing about this. He's excited. Look, this guy's glowing about this, he's into it.

Mayor: Now, I did not vote for pepperoni, number one. But pepperoni kicked pizza ass, okay.

[Laughter]

It's just, pepperoni won [inaudible] did not win the outright majority, but it got support from voters whose first choices didn't succeed, but who put pepperoni somewhere on their list. Pepperoni, ladies and gentlemen, won the day.

Darden: Okay.

Rosenberg: I just looked at how this works. Now this could benefit someone though, like an Andrew Yang, who does not get – in my opinion, will not get a lot of first choice, but could end up like the third or fourth choice for many people. Like it's – like, I don't know, I have some nervousness about this whole thing. Like, I feel like you might have a lot of people who really want one of the progressives and so they go for Maya Wiley, let's say, and whoever, Kathryn, whoever the person is. But then that third person who really isn't that wanted by any of them ends up becoming mayor.

Mayor: Well – so, this is about how you go about voting. And I like to respect the intelligence of voters, of everyday New Yorkers. I think your show, to your great credit, does that all the time –

Rosenberg: Thank you –

Mayor: [Inaudible] conversation because you respect people's ability to hear and think about stuff. So, here's what I'd say, you don't put someone on the ballot you don't want to be mayor. It's as simple as that. You have five choices. There's eight leading candidates. Choose anyone that you think could be a good mayor or a decent mayor and do it in order what you feel. If you feel someone should not even go near City Hall, don't put them on your list. And that's the best way to guard against a situation where you end up with an outcome you don't like. It really empowers the individual voter because your vote's going to stay alive through the process. But you get to say who's off your list as well as who's on your list.

Darden: So, de Blaz, who's on your list?

Mayor: Ebro, Ebro, Ebro –

Rosenberg: Give us something, man –

[Laughter]

Darden: Nah, man.

Rosenberg: Come on, we're easy, we're easy.

Darden: Come on, man. You want to talk – you want to come up here and talk pizza? You think I wasn't going to ask you who's on your list?

Mayor: Ebro –

Stylez: Who do you like, Mayor?

Mayor: Ebro, I'm going to tell you now privately, but I don't want you to share it with anyone. Just you and me. No, I'm not doing that –

[Laughter]

Darden: Let me ask a follow-up then. Do you feel like mentioning your list is good or bad? Like tell us why someone in your position would not want to say who they're voting for.

Mayor: The number one reason is I have not made a final decision. There's a debate tonight at 7:00 PM, think it's on NBC. I want to urge all New Yorkers, please watch that debate because I feel like we got to hear more from these candidates and people need to get informed. This is a huge decision. This is going to determine how we come out of this crisis and the future of this city. So, I want to hear more from these candidates so I can figure out my personal rankings. And then I'm going to decide if I want to talk about it publicly.

Darden: Okay.

Stylez: Fair enough.

Darden: Okay.

Rosenberg: Mayor, thank you.

Darden: I don't know how I feel about it.

[Laughter]

Stylez: Thank you, Mayor.

Darden: I wanted an answer –

[Laughter]

Mayor: Ebro, are you ranking five people?

Darden: Yes.

Mayor: Okay. Laura?

Stylez: Yes. Yes.

Mayor: Okay. Rosenberg?

Rosenberg: Yeah, I got five. I don't know how psyched I'll be [inaudible] –

Darden: I got – right now I got Maya, Ray, and then –

Rosenberg: How can you go to Ray, two? After Maya? That's wild to me, that's a big jump.

Darden: It is a big jump. And then I like Stringer and then I'm not sure. Kathryn, I liked, but I'm not sure – like, I don't really feel anything from her. Yang, he said some nice things, but I don't – I mean, we had him on yesterday. I don't know how, he – like certain things, I don't necessarily trust all the way.

Mayor: So, can I give you some friendly advice?

Darden: Adams, you know, I like Adams personally, but then you start hearing stuff politically. Like he used to be a Republican and he lives in Jersey. So, like what's going on, man –

Rosenberg: Mayor, what do you want to say to Ebro? Go ahead –

Mayor: Ebro, I think you need to do a little more research. I may say this as a friend and admirer.

Darden: Put me on.

Mayor: [Inaudible] studying up, thinking it through, you have a lot of opportunities to see these candidates next week. What you just said is honest. And we've all been there. We've all been in the voting booth and sort of going by what we feel in our heart or something we'd heard or one thing that kind of stands out. This election is going to decide how New York City comes back and whether we become a city that's more about equality and addressing disparity or whether we become a city [inaudible] –

Rosenberg: Let me translate what the Mayor's saying –

Darden: He's saying don't vote for Ray –

Rosenberg: He's agreeing with me and Laura, how could you mention Ray?

[Laughter]

Mayor: Listen, don't interpret, my point is –

Darden: No, listen, that's why I said it like that because I'm going – I knew I'd get him. I knew I could get him –

Mayor: Ebro, you're so – you're devilish. But, seriously, everyone needs to – because the thing is, this system does actually require the voter to believe in it a little bit more and think it through because in the past you come down like, oh, you know I choose one person you sort of like, get your leading brand you like, and you just stick with it. You don't have to think so much. This makes you think a little bit more. And I think that's healthy. It makes you really examine [inaudible] –

Rosenberg: Well, Mayor, we don't – listen, let me say something. No one in the city has put more thought into this damn election than us. We have interviewed these people for a combined 70 hours. So, if we don't have enough information. We're in trouble, Mayor –

Stylez: And for the public, watch the debate tonight because I'm sure you'll get a lot of useful information from watching them –

Darden: Well, shout out to my guy, Kai Wright, over there at WNYC, I think they've done a little bit more work than us.

Rosenberg: Fair, fair.

Mayor: Can I say, I thank Laura for reminding people to listen and learn and think for themselves. And Rosenberg, 70 hours is an incredible amount of time. The fact that you are high during all of that is why [inaudible] –

[Laughter]

Darden: Speaking of getting high, is there a strand of weed that you like? Now that it's recreational or are you allowed to smoke weed? What's going on?

Mayor: That's not my thing.

Darden: Not your thing.

Mayor: Not my thing.

Rosenberg: Ebro, could talk to you all day. We got to go, Mayor. We love you. Take care of yourself.

Stylez: Thanks for check in, Mayor.

Mayor: Good luck, everybody –

Darden: Go Brooklyn. Go Brooklyn Nets. And then on the last thing, Mayor, I need you to say, I need you to say, “Thank you, Black people.” Juneteenth is –

Mayor: Thank you, Black people.

Darden: Thank you.

Mayor: Thank you, Black people. Everyone celebrate Juneteenth together. And James Harden – I mean Kevin Durant, of course, amazing performance. But James Harden, I don't care if he couldn't walk, just get on the court and intimidate the Bucks.

Rosenberg: That's what he did.

Mayor: That's all I ask. Amazing. Amazing.

Darden: Mayor de Blasio, ladies and gentlemen. Thank you very much, take care.

Rosenberg: Go listen to my album, Mayor. Go listen to “Real Late.”

Mayor: Absolutely, Rosenberg.

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