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**TRANSCRIPT FROM THURSDAY, AUGUST 11, 2022: MAYOR ERIC ADAMS
DELIVERS REMARKS AND RAISES DOMINICAN FLAG**

Miosotis Muñoz, Deputy Commissioner, Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs: Thank you so much, Arthur. What a wonderful day. It started out raining and look at how the sun came out. So my greetings, greetings to the Office of the Consul General of the Dominican Republic, greetings to everyone. Please give yourself a strong applause, community leaders. I want to feel you. I want to hear you. And we definitely want to make a big round of applause to Arthur Piccolo, for his kind introduction. I want to thank you so much for being such a great historian and thank you for making today's Dominican flag raising possible in celebrating the Dominican Republic and our Dominican culture. As we look around, and please do look around, and we see how the Dominican community has brought new ideas, new energy, and new opportunities to our borough and our great nation. Today, I stand before you, as an Afro-Dominicana, who arrived here, yes, in New York city in 1974. Please don't do the math. From El Ensanche Luperón and I want to just say to you that La Capital is in the house.

Muñoz: No offense, de la gente de Santiago. [Speaks in Spanish.] I became a US citizen in 1993 to be able to vote for our first Black mayor at the time, Mayor David Dinkins. And today we have a building, the municipal building named after David Dinkins. And I mentioned that because it is so symbolic of how my footsteps followed. I worked for Borough President C. Virginia Fields, and before her, I worked for Ruth Messinger. I then was able to work as director of operations for Congressman Rangel. So this is how far my immigrant experience goes, from that little girl that arrived thinking that I guess snow could be turned into frío frío. That means

icy. And I am humbled. I am truly humbled and honored to serve as deputy commissioner to Commissioner Manuel Castro for the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs. We at the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs are dedicated and we're committed to closing the access gap for all immigrant New Yorkers currently here and newly arrived.

Muñoz: We could not do this without the leadership of Eric Adams, our mayor, and Commissioner Manuel Castro. And of course you are community partners. Let me just share with you how humbled and how honored I am to know that we have a fighter, an activist. Our commissioner, Manuel Castro, just to share with you how he understands our immigrant experience. He arrived here in the United States at the age of five, which is how old I was. I almost arrived here at the age of five. And he came here as an undocumented immigrant who crossed the border with his mom and his extraordinary journey brought him here to New York City, understanding firsthand the challenges of the immigrant community.

Muñoz: As an activist, we have to say he is as staunch and the most extraordinary activist and as a former director of NICE, director that allowed for a lot of the undocumented immigrants to receive access. And that's where he started closing the access gap to immigrants. And it is for this reason that I now want to say something in Spanish. [Speaks in Spanish.] So we are not going to need language access today. I will be language access. Isn't that what the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs is all about, commissioner? [Speaks in Spanish.]

Commissioner Manuel Castro, Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs: [Speaks in Spanish.] So I'd like to first start by thanking the Bowling Green Association for this partnership that allows us to uplift and celebrate New York City's immigrant communities. To celebrate democracy, freedom, and our shared values, but most of all, to bring us all here together to say that New York City belongs to all of us and that we will continue to be the city of immigrants. And we will continue to be welcoming to all immigrants, including asylum seekers, who are arriving day to day here in New York.

Commissioner Castro: Thank you, Deputy Commissioner Miosotis Muñoz. I want to take this as an opportunity for thanking you and your leadership and making sure that all immigrants have access to New York City, but most of all, for your passion in fighting for all of us, including myself. For opening el camino por todos nosotros, I wouldn't be here without the work and passion and contributions of your leadership and of leaders that came before us. Same with Commissioner Rodriguez, who is here with us. [Speaks in Spanish.]

Commissioner Castro: Today, we continue to celebrate La República Dominicana y los Dominicanos de Nueva York. So it is with great pride and honor to introduce to you Ydanis Rodriguez. [Speaks in Spanish.]

Commissioner Ydanis Rodriguez, Department of Transportation: [Speaks in Spanish.]

Commissioner Rodriguez: Sometimes, you know the glory, but not the story. [Speaks in Spanish.]

Commissioner Rodriguez: But I want to be — to add to a great friend here who is so committed — to celebrate Juan Rodriguez. There is a story about Juan Rodriguez. What happened is because of the color of Juan Rodriguez, a free Black man that was brought from the island of La Hispaniola when at that time it used to be Haiti. And the Dominican Republic, probably because of the color of the skin, we are not giving Juan Rodriguez the status, the space, and include Juan Rodriguez in the social studies subject that I used to teach for 15 years.

Commissioner Rodriguez: So our Black, our Latino, our Asian, our Caucasian, our Jew, they should learn that before the Dutch established in New York City, they went to the Caribbean and brought Juan Rodriguez. And the historians from Moya Pons to others in European. They've been studying the original copy of those documents, where the Dutch merchants — they were fighting for who will control Juan Rodriguez.

Commissioner Rodriguez: Juan Rodriguez was the one that was able to translate based on the document. Juan Rodriguez was someone that based on the document, made his family with all the Native Americans and stayed in New York City. So for all New Yorkers and visitors, what we are sharing with you, the history of this city that we learn about whom were the first who settle here. The first one was a free Black man named Juan Rodriguez. João Rodrigues, brought by the Dutch.

Commissioner Rodriguez: But also as a former social studies teacher also, I can share with you that we never talk about Ellis Island and who came through Ellis Island. When we talk about immigrants, think about the Latino that came here, the Mexican, the Latino, the Dominican, the Puerto Rican in this century. In 1884, 4,000 Dominicans came through Ellis Island. They were well-educated. We need to go and tell this story, not just to the Dominicans, but to any youth that come from the former Soviet Union. Anyone that comes from Asia, from Africa, from Latin America.

Commissioner Rodriguez: Mayor Adams has said, “New York City is known as place made by people that we come from different part of the world.” And we are defined by the resilience. We don't give up. We came out from COVID. We came out from 9/11. And that beautiful flag of the place where I was born and raised. And I came here at the age of 18 to wash dishes, to be a taxi driver, to work in the cafeteria, make someone [inaudible] that is still today. English is not my first native language, but I lead one of the best and largest transportation systems in the whole world and the largest, one here in New York City and the United States of America. That's who we are. For New Yorkers and visitors, you are in the best place. Gracias.

Commissioner Castro: Gracias, comisionado. I would like to introduce to you Edward Mermelstein, commissioner of the Mayor's Office of International Affairs.

Commissioner Edward Mermelstein, Mayor's Office of International Affairs: Thank you, Commissioner Castro. My name is Edward Mermelstein. I am the commissioner of International Affairs for New York City. I'd like to thank the elected officials that are with us today. Consul general, thank you for joining us — consul general of the Dominican Republic, and to everyone else that's joining us here.

Commissioner Mermelstein: The Dominican Republic is represented in New York City by the largest immigrant population. The Dominican immigrants in New York City are the largest population of New York City. I had the pleasure of attending the Dominican Heritage event yesterday at Gracie Mansion. It was wonderful to see such a strong celebration of your community. I am happy to join Mayor Adams, members of our administration, consul general, the Bowling Green Association, and all of you to celebrate the anniversary of the independence of the Dominican Republic.

Commissioner Mermelstein: I am grateful to the Dominican community for the contributions to make our city safe and strong. I am especially thankful to all the Dominicans that helped New York City through the height of the pandemic. I look forward to working with the consulate, my colleagues, and the Dominican community for the benefit of New York City.

Commissioner Mermelstein: Congratulations once again. Thank you.

Commissioner Castro: Thank you, commissioner. Now, I'd like to invite up Sophia from the CUNY Dominican Studies Institute. Thank you.

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Commissioner Castro: Before I hand it back to our Commissioner Rodriguez, I just want to acknowledge that Assembly Member Reyes is here with us, as well as Mariel De La Cruz from the Manhattan Borough President's Office, Mark Levine's office. Now I'll turn it back to Commissioner Rodriguez. Thank you.

Commissioner Rodriguez: [Speaks in Spanish.] I also like to add the president of the Dominican Day Parade please be here with us and I think it's important that we know that the whole celebration that we are doing is part of celebrating the Dominican Day Parade, the national one, and the great lady's here. Not only she's the president of the Dominican Day Parade, but she's also the CEO of the Metropolitan Hospital. So, [speaks in Spanish]. By the way, for again, New Yorkers and visitors, we should know why are we doing this, this day?

Commissioner Rodriguez: When the Dominican Republic got independence in 1844, we lost it. Because the guy that we put as the president, he was not so committed to keep the independence of the Dominican Republic. He wanted to annex it to the United States, to friends and others. So we [inaudible] the big thing with Spain coming and take over the land. So the person who fought back and reestablished independence is a great leader that, by the way, we could name after his name, the school that I was a co-founder, who for me is one of the grandfathers, fathers of the independence of the Dominican Republic as a independent, Gregorio Luperón. Let's remember Gregorio Luperón, this person that on August 16, reestablished the independence that we lost. [Speaks in Spanish.]

Commissioner Rodriguez: So I'm here to call someone that represents the Dominican government, the general consul of the Dominican Republic in New York. And again, the Dominican Republic is more than Punta Cana. It's more than La Terrena. It's more than merengue and bachata. It's more than all the great music and food that we eat. Dominicans are known and defined by hardworking people. And most Dominicans are normally the happiest people in the world, but also they are one of the most hard workers that you have ever met in life. Let me give you someone that represents it to a high level, my friend, my brother, Eligio Jáquez, the general consul of the Dominican Republic in New York City.

Commissioner Rodriguez: [Speaks in Spanish.] We are from our Dominican New York consul. In summer, it's more highlighting who we are as Dominican. I think that each of all say something about it. So it's about not only the hardest people in the whole world, but also one of the happiest people. And you go to Punta Cana, you know how Dominican is. [Speaks in Spanish.] I want to present someone. One of our — someone that, as he said last year, when he walk around the whole five boroughs, he was not a new friend. He was an old friend that's in the eighties. He was working together, shoulder to shoulder, with many police officers when he was a transit police, working so hard to be sure that the subway was safe. In the nineties, he was a captain. The president of 100 Black Police Officers, going to different places, including going to City College to talk to the youth about things that we had to do to improve the relationship between the police and the community.

Commissioner Rodriguez: He committed that he will be the first mayor in the history of New York City that as soon as he won, he will be going to the [inaudible] not only responding to the hurricane, but having meeting with the Senate and the Congress and the president and the business community about things that he could do. In the last eight months, he already being welcoming in numbers as a police officer that he was training through the NYPD to improve safety in the Dominican Republic. He is our friend. He is our brother.

Commissioner Rodriguez: He's one of the most important leaders right now, not only in New York City, but the role model to all the cities that are dealing with violence. When he come to be sure that people should know that the Black and Latino community want to be safe, that we want police officers who do the job, mutual respect between the community and the police. But we need them too. Ladies and gentlemen, [speaks in Spanish]. If you [inaudible] also be here with us because the mayor is also all about including everyone. [Speaks in Spanish], Mayor Eric Adams.

Mayor Eric Adams: I know I'm in New York because when I walked here, I smelled a lot of cannabis burning. This is so significant from the days of Juan Rodriguez, the first arrival here outside of Native Americans. It shows the rich history of the Dominican community of Dominican and African ancestry. But it's also significant because as my friend, the consul general has mentioned, this is the first time this flag is being hoisted here. We have been here several times since January, where we have hoisted flags of many countries. That stated, this is the first time their flag was hoisted here.

Mayor Adams: That is a symbol of this administration. This administration is about inclusiveness. It's about understanding that we are a city of different immigrants that come together to make our city a great place to raise healthy children and families. Coming from the borough president's office, where we witness 47% of Brooklynites spoke a language other than English at home.

Mayor Adams: As you move around the city, you see how important it is to have that diversity and nothing personifies that more than the rich culture, the rich contribution and the rich history of the Dominican community. We cannot say thank you enough. And the flag raising today, right here in Bowling Green at the center of our financial district, it's an empowering moment for the Dominican community, for all your contributions you have made. One of the largest Latino communities in New York City. This is DR of America, right here in New York.

Mayor Adams: So from the days of 1613, when Juan Rodriguez arrived here and started the movement towards the America, and it says to all groups, whenever someone states to you to go back to your country, you tell them you will when they go back to theirs, because we all came from somewhere to come to America and experience this American dream. For over 400 years, New York has welcomed immigrants from all over the world and we're going to continue to say they're welcome here. It is what makes us great as a country. I like to say, "Mi casa es su casa," and I should've started off by saying, "Hola, mi gente." It's good to be around you, and feeling the energy of the Dominican community. I may have been born in Alabama, but I'm Dominican, baby. So, viva la República Dominicana. Congratulations. Let's raise this flag!

Commissioner Castro: Thank you, Mr. Mayor, and now, I would like to invite Danza Folclórica Ricardo Ureña, who will perform before we raise the flag.

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