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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** May 21, 2018

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**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO, DEPUTY MAYOR THOMPSON, SCHOOLS  
CHANCELLOR CARRANZA DELIVER REMARKS AT FIRST EVER CITYWIDE  
STUDENT VOTER REGISTRATION DAY**

**Mayor Bill de Blasio:** Mohema, I am really appreciative for everything you've said. But I am inspired by your example, because we spoke a few minutes ago. And you are just passionate about voting, and about being engaged and making a difference. Let's give Mohema a big round of applause.

[Applause]

Student Voter Registration Day, like Mohema said, we should just focus on that for a second. For the first time ever in the history of New York City, students in high schools all over this city all at the same time are registering to vote and are being empowered. Do you like that sound of that?

[Applause]

And this is about your empowerment, everyone here, because we all need you. We need you to be in the game, we need you to be a part of making the city better and this country better. And for too long your voices were ignored. And there wasn't a real effort to engage you, and make you part of the democratic process. We want to change that, because we need you. We need you fully engaged; we need you to decide the course of your society. So this is an extraordinarily exciting day. I want to thank everyone who has been part making this happen here and at schools all over this city. There's been extraordinary enthusiasm from students and from educators as well. So I want to thank everyone who has been a part of it. I want to thank some of our special guests today. Janella Hinds, who's the Vice President for Academic High Schools at the UFT. I want to thank Jennifer Raab, the President of Hunter College. I want to thank Kevin Froner the principal of Manhattan Hunter Science high school

[Applause]

Alright, and all the educators in the room, let's give them all a round of applause.

[Applause]

So I am going to invoke a famous phrase. This is what democracy looks like. Everyone together with their "I Registered to Vote" sticker, including our Deputy Mayor who registered here in New York. He was voting in Massachusetts before now he is registered in New York. That guy right there was voting in Texas, now he's registered in New York. Let's congratulate these new voters.

[Applause]

And so much is happening here at the MLK Educational Campus. I can feel the energy, and the commitment of the students and the educators. And I really want to thank you for that. But when it comes to this especially, what we're doing here today – talk about emulating the spirit of Doctor Martin Luther King Jr. He was very clear about the need to fight for voting rights. And remember, put yourself in that time in history when people were just trying to get the right to even be able to vote, and not to have to pay a poll tax to vote. Things we take for granted today. Well, he said something really that should resonate for all of us. He said "voting is the foundation stone for political action." Everything matters, if you're trying to change a society for the better. But voting is the basis of all other change. So, this is why today is so important. Because voting allows you to take your values, take your needs, take your interest, take your beliefs and put them into action. And you can't do that if you're not registered. So, just today seeing dozens and dozens of students in line waiting to get registered to start on that journey was so inspiring. And as Mohema said, this is a moment, this generation is powerful. I am just so moved by what I am seeing. Yes, it's the #MeToo movement, it's the Black Lives Matter, it's the Women's Marches all over this country, the biggest demonstrations in the history of this nation literally. It's students fighting for gun safety. We've seen things we have never seen either ever, or in many decades. And they're all happening right now, and they're all happening at the same time. Well, where is all that leadership coming from? It's coming from high school students; it's coming from college students.

[Applause]

And you're inspiring all of us to recognize we have to do more. And I really want to be clear about that, but also humble about that. We all need to be able to receive leadership from the next generation. We need to be able to hear your voice and act on your vision, because you're not being held back by the assumptions of the past. Some people overtime get cynical. You're not cynical, you're focused on action. And we need to really be moved by that. I certainly can tell you I am. I am deeply moved, and deeply appreciative. So, we got a journey ahead now. Because this is one piece of what we're doing today, to register people who need that opportunity to vote. But I got to tell you, I hate to tell you this but in this state we are particularly far behind. You probably read about other states where there is purposeful efforts to add voter restrictions. Have you read about the states – raise your hand, where they're putting in ID laws to stop people from voting. Who knows about those? So in some states in recent years they've made people have to bring very specific forms of ID and won't allow you to register, won't allow you to vote if you don't have them. And it's explicitly to discourage voting. And that's horrible. And yet you see in some of those states people overcoming those restrictions, blowing right by them, fighting against them so notably in Alabama last November.

But I got to talk about this state, and I say it with sorrow, the State of New York is one of the most backwards states in the country when it comes to voting laws. And we like to think of ourselves as such a progressive, advanced place. Well we're not when it comes to voting laws. Because you cannot register the same day as the election here in New York State and you don't have early voting in New York State. Something that's used in so many other states to encourage voting and make it easier, get more people involved. There's a whole host of problems that have not been addressed in this state and we need to fix them this year in Albany.

The thing we're doing here today, something as logical as this, if you're a high school senior, you're 17 and you're about to be able to vote, we should make sure your registered while your still in school. That doesn't exist in this state. We're doing it here in New York City as part of our DemocracyNYC initiative. It should be state law. Who thinks that every 17-year-old should be registered to vote in their school in this state?

Alright. We have a majority. Voting should be easy. It should be something we encourage people to do. But here's the harsh reality in this state, millions of people are eligible to register to vote and are not registered – millions. Well, over a million here in New York City alone. Think about if you added another million people what that would do to further change our society. And too many of them, in fact, are exactly young people who have so much to offer but have been discouraged because registration is so hard, because voting is so hard.

So this is the year to break through. And now that all of you are further empowered, I want to ask you to help us, to spread the word that we've got to fix the voting laws in this state and make voting easy for New Yorkers. That's for everyone's interest.

Now, I want to ask you to do a couple more things. I mentioned the DemocracyNYC initiative. This is about maximizing civic engagement and maximizing voting. It's going to be a systematic effort under our Deputy Mayor Phil Thompson to encourage New Yorkers to get more involved in their community, to get more involved in the electoral process in every conceivable way, to help change this city for the better through their involvement.

If you want to learn more about it go to [nyc.gov/democracynyc](http://nyc.gov/democracynyc). You can see all the things that are being started and all the ways you can be involved.

But I want to ask you to do one other thing. I'm going to do this and then I'm going to say a few words to summarize in Spanish. But I first want to do this. We have a civic engagement pledge – make sure everyone sees it. A civic engagement pledge and it's very simple. It is about you committing today, now that you're registered, committing to actually being involved. So I want you to repeat after me. This is a very broad statement of support for being involved in your community. Repeat after me: I pledge to be active, engaged, and committed to my community.

**Audience:** I pledge to be active, engaged, and committed to my community.

**Mayor:** I will represent my community by making sure that my voice is heard.

**Audience:** I will represent my community by making sure that my voice is heard.

**Mayor:** I will encourage my friends, family, and community members to join me.

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**Mayor:** In building a city, state, and country that works for all of us.

**Audience:** In building a city, state, and country that works for all of us.

**Mayor:** Congratulations you have taken the pledge.

[Applause]

Now, that's three sentences. I ask you to try and live that out. Every chance talk to your family, talk to your friends, talk to your neighbors. Tell people it matters to be involved.

Just a few words in Spanish –

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

With that a man who can say it eloquently in both English and Spanish, whatever he wants to say, and is doing such important work for all the students, and parents, and people of this city, Chancellor Richard Carranza.

[Applause]

And new voter –

**Schools Chancellor Richard Carranza:** And a new voter, that's right. Mr. Mayor, thank you so much. Deputy Mayor Thompson, all of our elected officials that are here, Principle Froner and especially Mohema, wow great job, great job.

Mr. Mayor I have to tell you we are in school and I'd give you an A+ on that Spanish.

[Laughter]

**Mayor:** I'm working on it.

**Chancellor Carranza:** Conviction and passion.

**Mayor:** I'm practicing sir.

**Chancellor Carranza:** I thought it was a song.

[Laughter]

Well done. I'm excited, I'm beside myself being excited because this is the bread and butter of what we do as educators. To bring students forward, have them own their education and express that by registering to vote. The notion that every student, every vote counts is an incredibly powerful, powerful notion. As a former American government teacher, I still remember trying to get students in the late 80's to understand why it was important that they would actually vote and I think Mr. Mayor you've hit upon a very important subject that recently, unfortunately because of the history of what's happened in the last several months in our country, student voice more than ever has risen and students are owning the narrative. I just had an opportunity to sit in on students that were doing some work and some of the research projects that they had. And invariably every one of the students said we understand that our voice is important because we may be one vote but one vote in a body of many votes can make a difference. So I'm so thrilled, I'm so proud of the work that you are doing. And I'm actually really excited to have gotten registered today. I waited because I knew I wanted to get registered today. So thank you for registering me.

So why is this important? Because we know that education is the bedrock. It is the corner stone of our democracy. A well informed populace will never get sold a bill of goods. And it's our students more and more are civically engaged. They will drive the narrative. This is the next generation of New Yorkers, not only New York City but in our state and in our country. And we also want to tear down any barrier that might keep our students from being engaged. So across high schools, all over the city today we are bringing in voter registration forms, civic engagement pledge forms, which the Mayor read and we all took the pledge today.

And we are making it easier for our students to be active members of our democracy once they graduate. In fact we don't want to wait until they have graduated. As soon as they are registered we want them to be involved. And I also share in the vision of Mayor de Blasio and am very excited about Civics for All Initiative. Every school in New York City has received a resource guide which will make voter registration a meaningful and learning experience. And not just filling out a form but starting next school year we are even upping our efforts another degree – participatory budgeting in our high schools next year. We will have \$2,000 for students to work together as a democracy and decide how they spend those \$2,000. Now \$2,000 is not a lot of money but it's a significant amount of money in a participatory mindset. New resources that make it easier for teachers to bring current events into their social studies, science, and English classes. This is all part of our Civics for All.

So much of this is what our students and educators have been advocating for. And as I've gone around the city I've heard you. In fact many of the student town halls where students said we want a voice, here you go. A real opportunity to have a voice and as I've listened to those voices, this is something that has risen to the top of our students. We are here at a school that has been doing voter registration day for over ten years. And I want to congratulate our principle, Principle Froner, thank you for your leadership.

[Applause]

And I'll tell you as I just met the principle here in the hallway, between the entrance and to this press conference, I've got five other things he wants me to work on so absolutely. Thank you for being visionary, thank you for being smart. Thank you for being passionate about this. And to our students and educators who are smart, passionate, engaged, and know the best of the world. I want you to understand that we are going to work hard to continue to make it not only easy but meaningful for our students to be registered to vote. So with that I want to say congratulations, this is a big day and with that I'd like to introduce someone who is –

**Mayor:** No.

**Chancellor Carranza:** No? Is that yours?

**Mayor:** Where's some Español, dude?

**Chancellor Carranza:** Oh, Español –

[Laughter]

I would never ever compete with you, Sir.

**Mayor:** I set you up. I said how great you are in both languages.

**Carranza:** Not as good as the Mayor, but here we go.

**Mayor:** Doubt that but try, try.

[Chancellor Carranza speaks in Spanish]

**Mayor:** He was just lying to you.

[Laughter]

[Chancellor Carranza speaks in Spanish]

**Mayor:** And we believe you speak Spanish now.

[Laughter]

**Chancellor Carranza:** So with that – thank you, Sir.

[Applause]

I'd like to introduce our Deputy Mayor – Deputy Mayor Thompson. And he's going to be leading some great initiatives with us. Deputy Mayor –

[Applause]

**Deputy Mayor J. Phillip Thompson:** Thank you. Thank you.

[Deputy Mayor Thompson speaks in Spanish]

[Laughter]

I just want to say first that every big change in the world and every big change in this country has been led by young people. And the most important power there is in this country is the power of the vote.

Right after slavery, slaves fought for and won – the activists who fought the Civil War won the right to vote for former slaves. The first thing they did when they took power in South Carolina, which was the first state, was to legislate public schools because they knew that in order to use the vote well, they needed education. So, education and voting power is the key to change, it's the key to improvement in our country.

My first job, paid job, out of college was registering people to vote in southwest Tennessee and my wife was an attorney for the NAACP Legal Defense Fund. And she had a case in southwest Tennessee and it was a store owner who used his store to register people to vote and some people got so upset about that, they burned down his store, and his eight-year-old daughter died in that fire. And that was my wife's case.

Why did that happen? Because voting is so important. It's so powerful. People realized that there was real power here. And they went to extreme measures to try and stop it. So, with you all, there are going to be more changes in your life in America than any generation has seen in American history. I'll give you three reasons for that.

One, climate change. And you all are science students, you understand what's going on. It's changing the world and if we don't change, we're not going to survive. So, change is going to come.

Second is technology, and you know about that too. The pace of technological change has never been as rapid as it is now.

And the third thing is demographics. Pretty soon all of America is going to look like all of us in this room and so those changes are going to happen. And the decisions that government makes are going to not only affect people in New York City, it's not only going to affect people in the United States, the decisions that we make in our government are going to affect the entire world. And even the decisions that are being made now are going to affect you more than anyone else in society because you are young, you're going to have to live with that.

My son, Calvin is here somewhere – there he is in the back. He tells me all the time, "Dad, you guys have left us a hell of a mess to deal with."

**Mayor:** Very diplomatic.

**Deputy Mayor Thompson:** Right.

[Laughter]

So, we need your participation. I know you all are right on top of the issues even in the brief session we had early. You guys are really sharp, on top of the issues. And frankly, I think your generation has a better handle on the issues, at least we see things, than any other generation whether it comes to climate change or gay and lesbian rights or violence in schools.

Your generation is right on point. So, we need you and we want you to not only organize people in your schools but in your communities, in your household. Get everybody to vote.

And you know from what I can tell, you guys are going to make sure that the future of America and the future of New York City is going to be a super bright one.

Thank you.

[Applause]

[...]

**Mayor:** Okay, I want to do one more pledge here to conclude. I'll give you three opportunities here. First is who will pledge to go out and register at least one additional person in your lives? You have to do it though. Alright. Pledging. Pledging. Okay.

Who will pledge to register five additional people in your life? Family, friends. Five. Who's got five? Who's got five? I like some of these people – like, "I'm out."

[Laughter]

Five – okay. Alright. Now, for the gold circle. You know where I'm going. How many people pledge this year – this year, calendar year, 2018, you got all your family, all your friends, all your neighbors, anyone, your houses of worship, anything else you're a part of – ten, who will register ten?

I like the – you're putting his hand up for him.

[Laughter]

Try. That's good. Try is good. We'll take a good try there.

Alright, let's give a round of applause to everyone who is going to register other people.

[Applause]



Alright. Thank you, everybody.

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