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**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO, FIRST LADY MCCRAY DELIVER REMARKS
AT THE WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH CELEBRATION AT GRACIE MANSION**

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Welcome to Gracie Mansion, everyone.

[Cheers]

It kind of looks like the year of the woman, doesn't it?

[Cheers]

Let's thank Jacqui for the great work she does – thank you, Jacqui.

[Applause]

This is one of the great events we do every year, because extraordinary women gather here at Gracie Mansion with their mentees. Are there mentees in the house?

[Cheers]

To all the mentees, will you join me in thanking the mentors?

[Cheers]

And every year, we see incredible energy at this event. But I can safely say, in the last year, it has just grown with such intensity, such feeling, because women are standing up and defending their rights, and fighting for a society that actually honors and respects them. That's what we are all about in this city, and it is the time to celebrate what is becoming a movement all over this country, and, more and more, all over this world.

Remember, on January 21st, 2017 – the greatest and largest demonstrations in the history of the United States of America as women stood up all over this country. And you saw they had a lot of allies all over the world, standing up as well. Some of them were men, yeah?

[Laughter]

But this is a moment where you can just feel the change crackling in the air. You can feel the sense of possibility. Chirlane and I were at a town hall meeting we held with students just a few hours ago. And these are students who are motivated, so many of them, by the tragedy in Parkland, Florida, to stand up and fight for change in their society. And if you heard their energy and their focus, you too would have been inspired. And, I will say, I think Chirlane would agree, many of the strongest voices were young women students – 16, and 17, and 18 years old, ready to take this society into their own hands and to make a difference.

[Applause]

So, it is an inspiring time. I want to thank everyone who's here. I want to single out some of the folks who are here – leaders of our city. I want to thank – District Attorney Darcel Clark is here from the Bronx. Thank you, Darcel.

[Applause]

First African-American woman district attorney in the history of New York State –

[Cheers]

I want to thank the Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer – thank you.

[Applause]

A thank you to any and all elected officials – if I can't see you, thank you anyway.

[Laughter]

And then, from my administration – a thanks to all of the Commissioners, all of the leaders in the administration. This administration, by the way, a majority of senior positions are held by women.

[Cheers]

That may be why the administration works so well.

[Laughter]

A special thank you to our Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services, Dr. Herminia Palacio.

[Applause]

Where you are? There she is – where is she? Okay, she's hiding off-stage.

[Laughter]

And in the vein of male allies, our newest Deputy Mayor, Phil Thompson – welcome.

[Applause]

So, here's what we believe in this city. We believe – okay, get ready, this stuff's going to be radical. I hope you can handle it.

[Laughter]

I hope you can handle it – I don't think you can handle it.

[Laughter]

You really think?

[Cheers]

We believe the government should look like the people it serves.

[Cheers]

I just want to ask, in New York City, who is the majority?

Audience: We are!

Mayor: We are is a good answer, that was good.

[Laughter]

We believe we are called to create equal opportunity where it has not existed. We are called to ensure there is equal pay for equal work where that has not existed. We believe we cannot call ourselves truly the greatest city in the world until we are truly the fairest city. You can feel when you're being treated fairly. You know it. You know a really good way to find out if someone feels if they're being treated fairly? Walk up and ask them. And if you feel there's opportunity, if you feel your contribution is regarded, and rewarded, if you feel the doors are open, if you feel you are truly a stakeholder, that's what it means to be the fairest big city in America. That's what we aspire – that every New Yorker can feel that, and we celebrate that today.

What we do not celebrate is ideas that hold us back. Now, there are some very well-meaning people over these last years that Chirlane and I have worked around the City – some very well-meaning people who have used a phrase from another time that we don't use anymore. And they've tried to be polite, and they'll introduce Chirlane, and they'll say, behind every great man stands a great woman, and we frown upon that phrase, because it's outmoded, isn't it?

Whoever you are, whoever your partner is, you stand beside each other. So, beside every great woman, if she has a partner that is a man, stands a great man. Beside every great man stands a great woman. I have a great woman by my side and we are partners in all we do.

[Cheers]

Now, I want to remind everyone, please check your calendar, check your smartphone, it appears to be the year 2018.

[Laughter]

And yet, when I say Chirlane McCray is my number-one advisor, the most trusted person in my life and in my administration – the person that I make all major decisions with, some people get uneasy. I am so at peace with the notion that the major decisions of this administration are made with Chirlane McCray, because she has always steered me right, and because she understands the lives of people all over this city. She understands the American experience. She understands what people of color have experienced in this country. She understands what women have experienced, and she is their voice every single day. I'm really comfortable with that.

[Applause]

Some seem to prefer the notion that the First Lady should work in the shadows – seen and not heard. Some seem to be harkening back to that phrase we also don't use anymore. Remember when they used to say, a woman's place is in the home? We don't accept that.

So, it's 2018, and we are blessed to have a new kind of First Lady who is a proud, strong leader, and my partner in all I do, and someone who has done so much for this City. And every time we hear people talk openly about the challenge of mental health, every time that stigma that has held people back is torn down, every time we talk openly about the challenge of domestic violence, every time a survivor knows that there's going to be help out there, every time we will say we're not going to accept a status quo that holds back so many of our people, you can thank our First Lady for all she has done.

It is my pleasure to introduce Chirlane McCray –

[Cheers]

First Lady Chirlane McCray: I love New York City. Wow –

[Cheers]

Happy International Women's Day!

[Cheers]

Thank you, Bill. Where did he go? It's so good to have a feminist husband, and a feminist Mayor, right?

[Cheers]

I want to thank Jacqui and the Commission on Gender Equity for all of the incredible work that they do to make New York City a model of equity and fairness.

[Applause]

And I want to say just good evening everyone, and welcome to Gracie Mansion – again!

[Applause]

This is amazing. I wish you could stand up here and see what I see. You are beautiful. You are really, really beautiful. And I love the energy in this room. I want to just like – can I do one of those things they do at concerts and –

[Laughter]

Something – something really special happens when women come together. Can you feel it?

Audience: Yes!

First Lady McCray: Yes. Take someone's hand. Take someone's hand next to you. Just – I – you gotta touch it. Right? Touch it. Right?

Doesn't that feel good? Right? Say I am my sister's keeper.

Audience: I am my sister's keeper.

First Lady McCray: I am my sister's keeper.

Audience: I am my sister's keeper.

First Lady McCray: I am my sister's keeper.

Audience: I am my sister's keeper.

First Lady McCray: Now take a deep breath. It's good. You know we all have more power than we realize – all of us. And tonight we want to reconnect – we want to connect you with more women and more tools to help you tap into that power that you have that you don't really think about, that you may not acknowledge all the time.

We asked all the leadership here tonight to bring a mentee or two or it looks like three, or four, or five in some cases – it's good, it's all good. Because it's up to all of us to help one and other and show our sisters the way our women power can be used.

And I will note that the way we learn about our power does not always flow from older to younger. I am 63 –

[Applause]

Yes, it's true, it's true. I am 63 and I – I am learning all the time from women of all ages. As my mother used to say every day is a school day if you're paying attention. My mom was my mentor.

After my mother I didn't really have many official mentors but I did have people who would encourage me, people who inspired me. People like Nikki Giovanni, and Maya Angelou, and Audre Lorde. Now, Audre was fierce. People who were activists and artists who touched me with their poetry and their prose and especially their personal narratives.

From them I learned that I had a voice, a story worth telling, and the ability to be a force for change. Like all of you. All of you. In the years since then one my greatest joys has been to encourage others to reach their greatest potential.

All of our – all of you who are mentees here today please let me hear you.

[Applause]

Okay. Alright. Well now. My message to you is no matter where you are in your career please make this a year where you step out of your comfort zone. Do something positive that is very unlike anything that you've done before. Seek out leadership opportunities at work and in your community. Speak up in meetings, and peruse your dreams. How about it for our mentors?

[Applause]

Mentors are you really here? Maybe it's because its 3:00 pm to 5:00 pm. Mentors let me hear you.

[Applause]

Mentors – my message to you we have to back these women up. When they speak up please make sure that their ideas are heard. Speak out against inappropriate behavior and harassment. And help us find ways to fill the talent pipelines in your fields with diverse candidates and help them succeed.

And most of all remember to take care of yourselves. Aright? You know what they say when you get on the airplane, put on your oxygen mask first. Right? You know we always like to help other people, that's what we do. But put on you oxygen mask first. And we have a number in this

city that you can call if you need help. What is it? 1-8-8-8-NYC-WELL. One more time. 1-8-8-8-NYC-WELL. And I want to make sure everyone always has a place to turn, somebody to talk to if you need it.

Now, the #MeToo movement is changing the public conversation but we still have a long way to go. The good news is that we can all take action to support and protect our sisters. This administration has fought very hard for women from the very beginning. We secured paid family and sick leave and paid safe time for survivors of violence. Employers can no longer use the size of your last paycheck to determine the value of your work. And we will continue fighting for equal pay for equal work, economic opportunity, and safety for all women. Will you fight with us?

[Applause]

I said will you fight with us?

[Applause]

Will you fight with us?

[Applause]

Good. When women stand together we are an unstoppable force. Last year we took over the streets with our signs and made our voices heard. We set fire to a movement with our personal stories of harassment and abuse, and this year we can fill the ballot box with our votes.

[Applause]

That's right. And guess what? We can run for office too. Already more women than ever before are running for office. And let me take a quick poll, how many of you have ever thought seriously of running for public office? Please raise your hand.

Look around, look around. Look to see who they are. Alright. Alright. That's – this is – this is good. But it's not good enough. In this room – in this room filled with exceptional women we have to get more of those hands up in the air. You agree?

[Cheers]

So, what's it going to take? How many of you are rethinking that question I just asked? Alright. Alright. Whatever your professional or personal calling is we need more women leaders. We need you to run for office and we need them now. Please join me this year in committing to helping our sisters embrace their power. Commit to volunteer. Give your time to help other women find their way. Commit to vote. Show up where it counts, and when it counts. And bring your friends. Commit to run. Encourage other women to run for office, and support the ones who do.

Alright we're going to try this. Please repeat after me. I'm going to seriously consider running for office.

[Laughter]

Alright, you ready? Alright. I'm going to seriously consider running for office.

Audience: I'm going to seriously consider running for office.

First Lady McCray: Can we do that again? Alright. I'm going to seriously consider running for office.

Audience: I'm going to seriously consider running for office.

First Lady McCray: And I heard it takes three times before it sticks, okay, so we'll do it one more time.

I'm going to seriously consider running for office.

Audience: I'm going to seriously consider running for office.

First Lady McCray: Now do you think this is fun tonight, all of us together?

[Cheers]

Right, this is really nice right? This is what a campaign feels like. It's fun. Take it from me, I've been part of I don't know, 30, 40 – I can tell you –

Unknown: [Inaudible]

First Lady McCray: Oh no, I think we have someone who is a little jaded. It – I'm telling you from my personal experience it is a lot of hard work – it is. But when you surround yourself with people like all of you it is also fun. So, please consider running for office. And whatever you do please commit to lead in your workplace, in your community, in your city.

Alright? You going to do it?

[Applause]

Alright now. Please go forth and lead. Thank you.

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