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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: January 6, 2016

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**RUSH TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO DELIVERS REMARKS AT THREE KINGS DAY
BREAKFAST**

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Thank you. *Buenos dias!*

Thank you so much, Jorge Daniel, for your leadership of this great museum. It's been less than two years, but you've done so much for El Museo and it's just one of the quintessential New York City institutions that represents the greatness and the diversity of this city.

It is such an honor to be here.

Feliz Día de los Reyes a todos!

[Applause]

And this tradition – El Museo has had a celebration now – I think its 39 years – expressing the pride of the community.

[Applause]

And all the things we associate with this tremendous holiday. It's nice to be in the presence of royalty, by the way, thank you to all the kings and queen present. We think of a lot of things on this wonderful day and a lot of things that bring us a warm sense of connection to homelands, and to culture, and to faith.

We think of the *maravillosos disfraces*.

We think of the delicious *coquito* – that should be later in the day people.

[Laughter]

We think of *rosca de reyes*, the *música alegre* – so many things that are part of this joyous holiday. It is a feast for all the senses – and we have with us so many great leaders who care about this city and want to celebrate all that we are.

Led by [inaudible] – our Speaker of the City Council, Melissa Mark-Viverito, thank you for all you do.

[Applause]

We have a wanna-be [inaudible] here – and that's a good thing – Scott Stringer, our Comptroller.

[Applause]

Ben Kallos, thank you – Council Member Ben Kallos, thank you for being here.

Everyone from El Museo – and I particularly want to thank Eileen Reyes Arias for her leadership.

[Applause]

And I want you to know I learned something important today – there are two great Victor Cruz's in New York City, okay. You know, one is injured right now, the other one is quite active, so –

[Laughter]

I like this one.

So, what we do each year with this celebration, with this precession, is express pride, express connection, express the greatness of part of what makes New York City possible. All of our Latino communities – our Puerto Rican community that's so historically strong and this neighborhood – this is the Bellwether neighborhood for the great Puerto Rican experience in New York City. All of our communities have made us what we are – and it's interesting, I think we're all paying a lot of attention to the debate raging in our country about, basically, who we are.

Are we a nation of immigrants?

Are we a nation that receives, with joy, with love, all peoples to make us great?

I would argue for hundreds of years, that's been true, so much so that it's obvious. That's what's worked. If you say America is great, you are saying immigrants are great. It's as simple as that.

[Applause]

If New York City is looked to all over the country, all over the world, as a place to emulate – everyone wants to visit here, everyone wants to be here – well, then they're saying they believe in the power of immigration. It's as simple as that. So, it's funny that we're having this raging debate in our country because we already know the answer. We are stronger because of all the people who make us up.

Now, brothers and sisters, isn't it interesting that some people, I'm certain, are proud of their immigrant roots, maybe, 75, 100, 150 years ago, but are very ready to kick the ladder away to ensure that no one new gets to come in, which makes no sense in the perspective of history.

We either are great, because we receive all people, or we're not.

We have to decide who we are as a nation.

Luckily, in New York City, we have decided. We are proud of each and every strand that makes up this great city. We could not be the greatest city in the world without the Puerto Rican community, without the Dominican community, without the broader Latino community.

So, we do this to celebrate who we are and to celebrate our pride and to push back, implicitly, on anyone who would tell us to be less who we are – so much so that it doesn't matter what the temperature is out, the precession goes on. By the way, last year, I believe, it was snowing – probably not the way they celebrate in San Juan but that's okay.

[Laughter]

People continued on and it is an example of perseverance and holding that connection tight.

Now, Three Kings Day means so much but it's obviously a very powerful metaphor – it's not only a statement of faith, history, culture, tradition, it's a powerful metaphor. The three kings came from all distance lands. They came based on faith. They came seeking something – doesn't that remind you of your own families? Doesn't that remind you of people who believe? By the way, that distance star pulled at them, called to them. They didn't have an exact picture, a map of what they would find – it was faith, like our ancestors came here. When my two grandparents came from Italy, they didn't know exactly what they'd find here, but they believed they could create something. They believed they could do something great for their families – and each culture has then, in turn, made us greater. So, Three Kings Day is a perfect day to remember who we are – and we all came here based on a faith of one type or another.

Now, this year, the theme which is so important and so much a part of what this museum is about, is youth empowerment. Take those words to heart – youth empowerment, it means, really, lifting up our young people. I would say, bluntly, we were not lifting up our young people if weren't giving them full-day pre-k – we just weren't. Now, every single child in this city gets full-day pre-k for free.

[Applause]

We've doubled the number of summer jobs through our Center for Youth Employment because if we're going to empower young people, we have to show them that's a great future for them. We have to empower young people and all people by showing them they are honored and respected regardless of documentation status, which is why we did IDNYC.

[Applause]

And, by the way, El Museo has been such a central partner in IDNYC and we're so appreciative – a program that was originally projected to sign up 100,000 people in 2015, ended up signing up 700,000 New Yorkers and it's growing all the time. We are very, very proud of that.

[Applause]

And, speaking of the number 700,000, that is also approximately the number of New Yorkers of proud Puerto Rican heritage – 700,000 people, who, right now, like so many of us, have a pain and a fear because of what they see happening to their homeland, because they see Americans who live Puerto Rico being treated differently than Americans who live in the 50 states. Puerto Rico is in dire danger. Puerto Rico is suffering because of changes in federal policy that undermine the Puerto Rican economy. Puerto Rico needs help from Washington like any other place in this great country needs help from time to time. Do we hesitate to help people in Texas or California or Minnesota when they're in danger? No. We should not hesitate as a nation and, therefore, it is time for our Congress to reach a hand out to Puerto Rico and help it through its distress.

[Applause]

It must happen or we're just not consistent and honest as a country. President Obama has done the right thing. He's offered a plan to get Puerto Rico into stronger shape to help it move forward. It's time for Congress to act. If the Congress doesn't act, we're basically creating two classes of Americans – we're saying this group of people gets help when they need it, this other group doesn't – and that won't stand. That will be a negative mark on this country in the eyes of the entire world.

Melissa and I, and so many others, were at the “*Unidos por la salud*” march in San Juan a few weeks ago – and the notion that not only is Puerto Rico in fiscal distress, but the health care of the Puerto Rican people is in danger, because, again, the federal government treats certain group of Americans one way when it comes to Medicaid, and the Puerto Rican people another way – and their health, their very well-being, is in danger.

Everyone can help.

Everyone can make their voices heard.

Everyone who represents you in Washington, needs to hear your strong belief – and, by the way, brothers and sisters, tell everyone you know in every other state, our congressional delegation believes in helping Puerto Rico but there strong Puerto Rican communities in Illinois, Pennsylvania, Connecticut, New Jersey, Massachusetts, Florida – did I mention Florida? A little bit of interest in Florida this time of year, don’t you think Scott Stringer?

So, I think we have a chance to make our voices heard and to support our brothers and sisters who live in Puerto Rico.

[Mayor speaks in Spanish]

We should be there for anyone in need, regardless of where they live. If you’re an American, you’re an American and we have to stand up for our brothers and sisters in Puerto Rico.

Join me in that fight. Join the speaker in that fight.

[Applause]

So, brothers and sisters, it is a joy to be with you this wonderful day. It is a joy to celebrate this beautiful tradition.

Again, happy Three Kings Day to all.

Feliz Día de los Reyes a todos!

Gracias.

[Applause]

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