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**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO, FIRST LADY MCCRAY HOST ST. PATRICK'S  
DAY BREAKFAST RECEPTION**

**First Lady Chirlane McCray:** Good morning, everyone. *Maidin mhaith*. Good morning. Okay, welcome to Gracie Mansion. This is the people's house, this is your house, and you are always welcome here. And you're especially welcome here on St. Patty's Day, when all New Yorkers get to show our Irish pride. Now in addition to being St. Patty's Day and a great holiday, March is also Women's History Month.

[Cheers]

Some people are happy about that. So let me ask a question to the women here, are you feeling proud to be Irish?

[Cheers]

Alright, let me hear you!

[Cheers]

Alright, we all know that Irish immigrants changed the fabric of our city and our nation but not many know that Ireland sent more daughters than sons. A 17-year-old Irish girl named Annie Moore was the first person to go through Ellis Island where her statue stands as an enduring symbol of the many young - many brave young women who made the journey from the Emerald Isle.

Women of Irish descent have contributed so much to our country, to arts and literature, to economic advancement, to the pursuit of social justice. Unsurprisingly, they haven't always gotten their due. Of course their names we know, like Mother Jones, Nellie Bly, Kate Chopin, but there are many, many more that were forgotten or obscured. So this St. Patrick's Day, I want to especially celebrate the daughters and the granddaughters of Aaron. Will you all join me?

[Applause]

Now when Mary Robinson became the Republic of Ireland's first woman president, she observed that her victory was driven by the women of Ireland who, instead of rocking the cradle, rocked the system. To all the women who are rocking the system day in and day out, may the road rise up to meet you and may the wind always be at your back.

It is now my pleasure to introduce another admirer of all things Irish, and my partner and love in life, and I would like to point out that my last name gives me a wee bit more Scottish-Irish cred than his, don't you think? But since it's St. Patty's Day please join me in welcoming our Mayor Bill de Blasio.

[Applause]

**Mayor Bill de Blasio:** Good morning, everyone.

**Audience:** Good morning.

**Mayor:** Extraordinary energy for this hour. God bless the Irish, I'm impressed. I'm impressed. Well I see a lot of Irish-eyes smiling today and there is so much to be proud of. I want to welcome everyone to Gracie Mansion. You are people who make so much this city. Everyone here contributes so much to this city, makes us great in so many ways, and you are so deeply committed to your heritage that you all got up at five in the morning. So, that - I want to thank all the members of my administration who are here, who so proudly celebrate this day, I want to give a special thanks to a very, very proud grandson of Ireland who keeps us safe every day our Police Commissioner Jimmy O'Neill. Thank you.

[Applause]

And since Chief Terry Monahan wore his nicest uniform I'm going to thank him too. Thank You Terry. You even took it to the dry cleaner this time, I'm impressed. We have some extraordinary guests with us you'll hear from in just a moment but a special thank you to some other leaders who really grace us with their presence, first of all the leader of the Irish-American caucus in the City Council, Councilman Danny Dromm, thank you.

[Applause]

See, what a fan club and thank you all the other elected officials. We thank you deeply for your support of this wonderful event. I want to thank and welcome the Council General of Ireland, Ciarann Madden, welcome and thank you for all you do. The permanent representative to the United Nations from Ireland, Ambassador Geraldine Byrne Nasim, thank you.

[Applause]

The Ambassador to the United States from Ireland, Daniel Mulhall thank you.

[Applause]

And the President of Sinn Féin Mary Lou McDonald, we welcome you and thank you.

[Applause]

I'm going to be very quick but I want – I want to put this in context. This City is great, no disrespect to any city in Ireland or anywhere else in America. We believe we're the greatest city in the world right here, who's with me?

[Applause]

We are great in large measure because of our Irish identity, because of the Irish contributions to this city because of the Irish strength and resilience that courses through the City of New York. It's unmistakable, look at our history if you took the Irish out of the history of New York City, there would be no New York City as we know it. It wouldn't even be close. And so we celebrate that and we celebrate it with an embrace and an appreciation that I hope one day will be the norm all over this country, all over this world. A recognition of what each people brings to make us greater to make us in fact greater than the sum of the parts. Now when you think of the history of the Irish in New York City and in America, it is rich with passion, and poetry, and music, and dance, and political - deep, deep political involvement. There are so many ways the Irish shaped this city, and I want to just focus for a second on the poetry because when the Irish were here initially, their names, their culture, their language their music were shunned by those who are already here and they were put down and they were discriminated against and they were treated of lesser value than others.

I asked for some examples of names of places in Ireland that gave a sense of the pure poetry of the Irish language Kilkenny, Killarney, Skibbereen, these are beautiful, beautiful names that speak to a rich culture. But again remember none of that was celebrated when the Irish first came here in fact for many, many decades it wasn't celebrated. Remember we all have heard the phrase Irish need not apply, that was commonplace you could see that in the windows of New York City for decades. Today we would say that is fundamentally against all of our values, in fact against our laws. But it was tolerated and it was the norm for so long. If someone spoke with a brogue they were immediately excluded. We came to understand over generations how wrong that was.

And in large measure the American experience and the New York experience of finding a better path is because of the persistence of the Irish, because they in so many ways were the group that blazed the trail to a more equal society. Remember 1928, the first Irish American man with his name on the ballot for President United States Al Smith who we honor to this day in New York. But that was a breakthrough moment for all of America to finally have someone who was not from the only group that had ever been allowed to lead breakthrough and that culminated with the election of John F. Kennedy in 1960, which opened the door for everyone else in this country. Remember there wouldn't have been a Barack Obama had there not been a John F. Kennedy first and that unites the struggle and the efforts of everyone towards a more just and equal society.

So when we think about the Irish contributions, you could go on all day we could start here early in the morning and be here at the same hour tomorrow, and count the contributions and the heroic names and the famous names all the way through. But what I like to focus on is how the Irish were the catalyst to so many changes that helped so many others. Never forget what people had to struggle through because it helps us think about this moment in history. We all can see with our eyes this is not a political event I assure you I will speak in the broadest terms, but we

can see a type of nativism setting in in some quarters that could remind us of the days when the Irish were told they need not apply we don't want to ever let that reassert itself in our city or our nation. And that history is our guardian in so many ways. Remembering that history is our bulwark against those efforts to exclude.

This day means so much to New York City, and I can safely say certainly in the context of the United States, maybe in some ways in the whole world. The center of the universe on St. Patrick's Day is right here in New York City, the greatest celebration.

[Applause]

And if you want proof of that statement, I'm about to introduce the Taoiseach, and if he's here it must be the center of the Irish universe. Now we got together yesterday to celebrate that the resources have finally been put together to open the Irish Arts Center and won't that be great for New York City.

[Applause]

And we're very proud in New York City to have contributed a lot. The City of New York is profoundly committed to the Irish Arts Center, but we needed one last push and it came from the government of Ireland and isn't that a beautiful symbol of the link between our people that this great cultural institution was made possible together. I also want to say as I bring him forward that through his election and through his vision he is showing not only the people of Ireland but of the whole world what an inclusive society looks like. You know, actions speak louder than words his very presence his very story reminds us of where we will all go together to a better place where all are respected. And I want to say for all of us who believe in justice what profound respect I have for the people of Ireland for voting for marriage equality.

[Applause]

And for having this man as their leader, ladies and gentlemen my honor to introduce the Taoiseach Leo Varadkar.

[Applause]

[...]

**Mayor:** Taoiseach, thank you so much, and again we are so honored to have you. And Taoiseach, thank you for recognizing that this is although a day of celebration and we're all in a good and festive mood that there is a sense of mourning too in this city for the loss of our two firefighters who were serving in the military. And before we go to our next very special guests let's just take a brief moment of silence and honor the two firefighters we have lost.

Thank you very much. Well, the last speaker is someone who has truly left his mark on history and it gives me tremendous pride to have him here at Gracie Mansion. By the way if you go down that hallway you'll see there's a photo on the wall next to a desk where Nelson Mandela sat and signed some papers when he visited Gracie Mansion. Some people leave a special mark because they fight for justice but they also understand the power of peace. And if you look at the history Gerry Adams, he obviously in everything he did, did not accept injustice, he didn't

tolerate it, he fought against it. In every way he has been an activist. I think of no prouder title that someone can hold. And he understood there was no place in this world anymore for colonialism, and he fought against that with all he had. Remember; remember that great ideas never die. They may be set back sometimes but they never die. And I honor Gerry Adams for his lifelong pursuit of the goal that makes so much sense, the goal of a united Ireland. Gerry has in all he's done, accepted that life of fighting for change came with peril came with the threat of violence and the actual experience of being attacked came with condemnation, it came with arrest and times in jail. But it did not deter him, and at the same time we could say that his most revolutionary act was to be an architect of peace, because peace requires opening a hand, and that can be a challenge in every way as Gerry has said and I'll paraphrase him. It is harder to make peace than to make war. But that is precisely what he chose to do. He is formally retiring, but I think his words, his actions, his example continues to animate many. Twenty years ago when he and others helped to bring about the Good Friday Agreement, they did something that for many of us seemed almost impossible because we had watched years and decades of struggle and strife. But history will remember Gerry Adams for being one of the people who did something truly heroic and truly revolutionary who found a path to peace where others could not envision it. And so many are alive today because of that. So what a special opportunity for all of us to salute a man who has done so much in his life. Ladies and gentlemen, I present to you Gerry Adams.

[Applause]

We have – Before you hear from Gerry a token of the esteem of the people of New York City. Gerry if you step up and hold this. You're no stranger to the photographic ceremony. This proclamation lauds your life and achievements but I want to just read the final sentence because it's the one that I think is most special today says “I, Bill de Blasio, the Mayor of the City of New York, do hereby proclaim Saturday, March 17th 2018 in the City of New York as Gerry Adams Day.” Congratulations, well done.

[Applause]

[...]

**Mayor:** Everyone I want to thank you so much for joining us. I want to thank another guest has arrived just to acknowledge her and thank her. Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney thank you so much. Alright you all get a gold star for getting up so early. Now, I advise you to stay up late and celebrate this wonderful day thank you everyone. Happy St. Patrick's Day.

[Applause]

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