

THE CITY OF NEW YORK  
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR  
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**CONTACT:** [pressoffice@cityhall.nyc.gov](mailto:pressoffice@cityhall.nyc.gov), (212) 788-2958

**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO APPEARS LIVE ON POLITICS NATION WITH  
AL SHARPTON ON MSNBC**

**Reverend Al Sharpton:** We start with tonight's lead – first wave new world. As we pass 80,000 domestic deaths from COVID-19, several States are going full steam ahead with their plans to reopen and even epicenters like New York State of phasing in their initial returns to normal ahead of summer. Of course, we've had two months to get a handle on the public health and even the economic implications of this pandemic, but as we've seen in our state houses and our streets is the social ramifications of this crisis that rebuild themselves daily with armed protesters, almost uniformly white, shutting down public businesses without fear, public business hearings and legislative places, and often without masks, while black and brown citizens have been on the receiving end of enhanced police response to this crisis.

This week New York Mayor Bill de Blasio announced residents in the city would no longer be required to wear a masks in public unless a serious danger was presented. This as his police department has come under fire over allegations of racial bias in social distancing environment, of slew of viral videos and photos visualizing the department's own data, who most of that enforcement has gone to. Joining me now is the Mayor of New York City, Bill de Blasio. Mr. Mayor, let me ask you first, what is your reaction to 48 states today, including New York, having some phase of going back to allowing the distance – well, not the distancing, but allowing stay in place, shelter in place to be relaxed, some more than others. What is your reaction?

**Mayor Bill de Blasio:** Rev., I think some places are doing it carefully, others are not, and it's a real concern for all of us because we're one country all connected. I do want to note from your lead in, one respectful correction, face coverings are required in New York City. The difference is we made clear that the NYPD was not going to give people summonses if they weren't wearing a face covering, but they are required to use them to protect each other and try and fight back this disease. But, Rev –

**Sharpton:** I thank you for that correction. I assure you I'm still wearing my face coverings –

**Mayor:** Very good, I believe in you. And so the – but here's the point to your question. We know there are states that reopened without having strong, clear health care indicators that confirmed that there were not create a lot of danger for their people, and for all of us. I'm hoping and praying that that doesn't lead to a horrible result. We're already seeing some states where the number of cases are up-ticking intensely. And so I would say Rev., you know, some states have been, I think reckless, others New York State's been pretty systematic, but every state, every city has to be ready, God forbid we see a resurgence, a kind of boomerang with this disease, you have to be ready to put those restrictions back if people's lives are in danger. So here in New York

City, we're going very careful, slow, we're not going to have a misstep. We're not going to take our feet off the gas. When we think it's time to open up, which is no earlier than June, in any way, we're going to do that carefully and slowly. And if we don't like what we see, we can always quickly reverse and put restrictions back.

**Sharpton:** What do you need to see to start moving toward opening the city up? Will schools open up in September, for example?

**Mayor:** Rev., I want to see our schools at full strength in September. Our kids have missed a lot of what they normally would have gotten in education. You and I have talked about this amazing effort by New York City's educators to compensate for that with online learning and actually at a stunning effort to overcome the digital divide. We now have almost 300,000 iPads that have been given out to kids in New York City public schools who couldn't afford, didn't have internet service or the devices they needed, they now have them for free. That's a good thing in the midst of this horrible situation, but our goal is not to have online learning and September, but to have the real thing in the classroom or at least most of the school week being in the classroom, but we're not there yet. We have a plan A which is a full reopening, but we're going to have a plan B, C, D, you name it in case we're not there yet health wise.

But in terms of your other question, look, next month will be the first chance to seriously consider any relaxation. We have three key health care indicators we follow everyday, publicly, openly, transparently. The State has seven indicators they're looking at, only when all of those are satisfied could you even talk about relaxing those restrictions. And then you would do it carefully for a period of time. Small number of restrictions would be relaxed, see how it goes. If that works, you open up more, but no false moves because the danger of a real boomerang could set back the recovery by months. So, it's much better to be steady and smart about this.

**Sharpton:** Alright we're talking about the digital divide, which you did provide a lot of those laptops and iPads because of the divide, there's always been a divide in terms of how we deal with policing. Since the shutdown began, 81 percent of nearly 400 social distancing citations went to black and Latino New Yorkers. And as you know, I've been raising this issue with your Police Commissioner, I've been very vocal about how we have disturbed about it. One, how do you deal with that data and what have you done by announcing this week that deals with what has caused an outrage among many in the civil rights community in New York?

**Mayor:** Yeah, and the Commissioner doesn't accept that kind of disparity, nor do I, we're just not going to have it. Rev., important to point out that in the course of this crisis, we're talking about the NYPD giving fewer than 10 summonses a day on average in the entire city of 8.6 million people, summonses for social distancing. So it's been a very small amount of enforcement, but there still is that disparity. We're not going to allow that.

**Sharpton:** But we have people being videoed, you have a mother with a daughter being videoed being thrown to the ground. You have another young man that was videoed being beaten, a small number, not this kind of aggressive policing and seemingly only in certain communities, it's just alarming and outrageous.

**Mayor:** It is, and we don't accept it. And look, sometimes out of 36,000 officers, you find some who are just doing the wrong thing and don't belong in that profession, and there's a way we deal with that. Other times it's officers who are trying to do the right thing, but at that moment may deal with a situation imperfectly. We're not going to allow anything to set us back from all the changes that we have made here, Rev. You remember what the city used to be like in terms of policing. In the last six years, we got rid of the broken unconstitutional policy of stop and frisk. We trained the entire police force constantly in de-escalation. It's made a huge impact. Body cameras on every patrol officer, got rid of marijuana arrests, 180,000 fewer arrests in 2019 than the last year of Michael Bloomberg, 2013. Fewer arrests on top of fewer stops and the city got safer. So the big reforms, the big changes are working.

But what we saw in these last days is not acceptable and we're not going backwards. We've said police are not going to be giving summonses over face coverings, are not going to be giving summonses over a small number of people who are together. They're going after the large gatherings that are the biggest danger to public health, and we cannot afford large gatherings at this point in our history. There's too much danger of the disease spreading. So we're going to keep the police focused only where the need is greatest, and we're going to continue the work of making the police force work more closely with the community. And we're going to bring in community leaders, clergy, community groups lots of community based allies to do the sort of forward work of engaging the community, educating people, giving out the free face coverings, that balance, I think will help us forward.

**Sharpton:** We will be watching. I'll be wearing my face coverings, but it doesn't cover my eyes.

**Mayor:** There you go. Very good.

**Sharpton:** Thank you, Mayor Bill de Blasio.

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