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**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO APPEARS LIVE ON MSNBC'S MORNING JOE**

**Mika Brzezinski:** So still with us we have MSNBC contributor Mike Barnacle, former aid to George W. Bush's White House and State Department's Elise Jordan, President of the Council on Foreign Relations, Richard Haass –

**Joe Scarborough:** Richard's a – by the way – a Yankees fan.

**Brzezinski:** -- and MSNBC news national political reporter Heidi Przybyla. Also joining the table, we have back with us the Mayor of New York City, Democrat Bill de Blasio. We have been talking to him over the weekend as we all want to understand more about the plight of these children, some that have come our way here in New York City. Have you been able to see them?

**Mayor Bill de Blasio:** Yes, I saw some of the kids last week, a group of kids primarily from Guatemala. Who were in a classroom in East Harlem and it was about 30 or 40 kids and now what we have learned in the course of the last few days is there is around 300 kids now in New York City. No word on when they are going to get reunited with their families –

**Scarborough:** Can I just ask you there because that's remarkable – 300 children. They've all come up from?

**Brzezinski:** How did they get here?

**Scarborough:** What? Were they flown up from the border?

**Mayor:** Joe, some were flown up, some were put on a bus with a civilian escort –

**Scarborough:** Who's not allowed to touch them.

**Mayor:** Right. And they have gone all the way in cases, 2,000 miles.

**Scarborough:** A lot of them don't even speak Spanish.

**Mayor:** Well the escorts I can't speak to but the kids certainly don't speak English.

**Scarborough:** Right.

**Brzezinski:** Right.

**Mayor:** And they are in the middle of something they don't understand. Here's what one of the folks who is helping them here in New York said to me, it was very poignant – I said what's the protocol for getting them in touch with their parents and they said well it depends, some kids have a phone number on a note in their pocket and if they have a phone number for their mother or their father, maybe we can reach them. But a lot of kids are too young, don't know the phone number, don't know anything about where their parent is, don't have that note.

**Scarborough:** How are young are they? Three? Four?

**Mayor:** Youngest was nine months.

**Scarborough:** Nine months old?

**Mayor:** Yes.

**Scarborough:** That's somebody brought from the border to New York that is nine months old, without their parents.

**Mayor:** Without their parents and with no idea when they are going to talk to their parents or when they are going to see them again.

**Elise Jordan:** Do you have sense of that nine-month-old's story? How was the nine-month-old separated? How does this happen in the United States of America where we are shipping a baby across the country?

**Scarborough:** Again I want to stop and I want to ask people, if you have children, if you have grandchildren, imagine a nine-month-old – you know what I'm talking about, we've had kids, we understand where a child is at nine months of age. You really pass the sins of the parents onto a nine-month-old child and rip that nine-month-old child out of a mother's arm and put them on a bus and drive them 2,000 miles with somebody they don't know? This is unspeakable and I hope I'm not over my skies here Mr. Mayor when I say this sounds awfully un-American to me because I am an old 55-year-old guy, I've never once heard of anything resembling this in the United States of America.

**Mayor:** You're right, you're right Joe. And what's shocking is you see these kids and you think about what they are going through. I mean they have gotten medical treatment since they came to New York City. There was no plan, let's be clear, there was no plan for providing for their mental health needs or their physical health needs. Well our health care professionals here in New York City started working with these kids and saw a lot of trauma. Imagine for any one of us if we were taken from our mother or father and no idea – and sent to a foreign country, no idea what's going on, maybe we get a phone call or two to a relative, maybe we don't and no word on when we are ever going to see our parents again. That's effecting [inaudible] deeply emotionally in terms of their mental health. We are trying to help them now but we are talking about now we're creating a generation of kids who are going to live with that real trauma.

**Michael Barnicle:** Tell us what you know about the nine-month-old baby. Clearly the baby doesn't speak.

**Mayor:** Right.

**Barnicle:** Tell us what you know about him or her, I don't know –

**Mayor:** Right, all I know, I'll tell you two points. One with the baby that came up what they said was obviously that's a baby where we don't necessarily know how to reach the family members because the baby can't tell us, the baby didn't have a note in their pocket because they didn't have a pocket. It's a free for all in that sense of whether you are going to have any kind of connection to the family and whether there is any plan to get them reunited. With some of the older kids it's better because they can communicate but in some ways it's worse because they are more conscious. So one of the family members reached out to us actually, looking for a child and we found him, a young boy named Eddie. He's nine years old. He's from Honduras, taken from his mom at Eagle Pass, Texas, put on a bus, 2,000 miles to New York City. And for that young man we know he's going through a traumatic experience and he's yearning to know when he's going to get back with his parents.

**Scarborough:** You've been inside of there. I've got a 10-year-old boy. I can't imagine a 10-year-old boy being ripped from his or her father or mother's arms, being driven 2,000 miles away, never knowing if they are going to see their parents again. And I'm just wondering was there anything about what you saw with that nine-year-old or with the three-, four-month-old child that resembled a summer camp? Because there is a broadcaster that has said that ripping babies out of mother's arms while they are breast feeding or parents being told that their children are going to the showers, being taken to the showers and then the disappear and they don't see them again. That's been compared to children going to summer camp. I'm curious did anything in this facility resemble a summer camp to you?

**Mayor:** Not in the least. I want to say the folks who are trying to help these kids are earnest. They are doing their best.

**Scarborough:** God bless them.

**Mayor:** But the one facility we were at in East Harlem, had over 200 kids for the daytime programs, then the kids go to foster parents at night who obviously they didn't know a few weeks ago. They are shuttled around a lot. No, it's not a good situation. People are trying their best to help these kids but it's not a good situation.

**Scarborough:** And you see a level of trauma there with these children?

**Mayor:** The medical professionals are telling us, they are immediately treating some of these kids and seeing the signs of trauma and mental health distress. And who wouldn't? What kid wouldn't feel that?

**Scarborough:** Oh my God, who wouldn't?

**Mayor:** And went it comes back to this core notion of treating the parents like criminals for seeking asylum, we get back to the question of what's happening to our country. You know for generations we respected that people came here seeking freedom, people came here fleeing oppression including a lot of our ancestors of all different backgrounds. That made us a beacon to the world, people respected America as a place you could go and get a fair hearing a flee oppression, now we are sending the exact opposite message. We know these families are running from violence.

**Scarborough:** And not only have we basically torn down all the concepts involving the Statue of Liberty, what it is supposed to mean, standing at the head of New York's harbor but, Mike, not only have we turned our back on that long held American belief – send us your poor, you tired, those yearning to be free – we are now punishing their three-month-old children, their four-month-old children, their nine-year-old children because their parents are coming to America for the reason we erected the Statue of Liberty in New York harbor in the first place.

**Barnicle:** Well, Joe, you were talking earlier and you're correct about so many people, a substantial percentage of Americans who refuse to believe us in the media when we point out the obvious lies uttered daily by the President of the United States. They just refuse to believe us. But there's something about a nine-month-old infant being put on a bus or a plane, I don't know how that infant got here – there's something about that that every American, regardless of ideology can identify with. And I think it is this. That they way that the government keeps records, everyone familiar with anything having to do with governmental records knows it completely haphazard and often chaotic. There is a possibility that this nine-month-old infant could be permanently orphaned. They keep telling us, over Senator Lankford this weekend told us on television, and he's pretty good guy, told us that they have a record, they know where every child taken, is. They know where every child is.

**Mayor:** But they won't tell us.

**Barnicle:** That's exactly right.

**Scarborough:** They won't show the list.

**Mayor:** They won't tell us –

**Scarborough:** They won't show senators, they won't show the press, they won't show the American Red Cross, I don't think. They won't show anybody.

**Mayor:** We've asked for it. How many kids are in our city? Where are they? What's the plan to reunify them with their families? We've got literally no answers and Mike, your point is –

**Scarborough:** Don't you have a right to know as Mayor of New York City? Can mayors, can senators, can congressmen [inaudible] –

**Mayor:** We're going to –

**Scarborough:** Can you get this information?

**Mayor:** We'll take the legal path and every other path and by the way it's been bipartisan. We had a group of mayors down at the border last week, Republican and Democrat alike, calling for an end of this policy and reunification of these kids. But to your point, Mike, absolutely these kids could get lost in the bureaucratic maze because if there's no transparency, if they won't – if the federal government won't even tell us where they are and what's going to happen next, they certainly weren't letting elected officials into the facilities in Texas for example.

This is a new reality. In the past it would have been unthinkable to not allow the folks who are supposed to provide oversight, like our senators and Congress people into the facility. This is where we should worry about our democracy. But these kids now get caught in the crossfire and if you have faith that a bureaucracy that won't even acknowledge their existence is going to reunify these families that takes a whole big leap of faith to think that.

**Brzezinski:** And Elise, I mean, we saw Melania Trump flying to the border at least symbolically trying to separate herself from this disaster created by her husband and the rest of his administration that stood by and watched, but it is not going to – she asked the question, how are these children doing? How are they going to be reunited – these are her words – with their parents? And there are still no answers as to actually how that can be executed and I think in some cases parents have been deported, I mean, how do they keep track? It's impossible.

**Jordan:** No one can answer the most important question, who are the children? Where are they? And how do we reunite them with their parents. Part of the new policy, they immediately said, well reunification immediately isn't – you know, that's not necessarily what we're going for? I mean really? Really that's not –

**Brzezinski:** So we're going to hold them hostage?

**Jordan:** I think they tried to recant a bit, but then again there's no plan and after what happened in Puerto Rico and the stunning incompetence of this administration, we're just supposed to trust that they're going to be able to handle children, who some of whom can't even speak yet, to be able to say who their parents are? They are going to get families back together? I just have no confidence. This is a bureaucratic and moral disaster.

**Brzezinski:** It is. And nobody knows that more than members of congress, Heidi? And at this point, how did that – how did anybody, especially in the Republican Party, stand by this policy? Do they think this – all that we are discussing here, what the Mayor is saying – is an exaggeration? Or is lies? I mean this is an abomination for sure, but how do they hide from this?

**Przybyla:** The answer is they're not trying to stand by it. They're hoping that if they don't get the big deal on immigration done, which even the President seems to have ruled that out at this point, that they can get some kind of a narrow measure to address family separations. You're seeing Republicans both in the House and in the Senate talk about that – Chairman Mike McCaul talked about it over the weekend, you know the Homeland Security Chairman, and then in the Senate my reporting is that today Senator Cruz and Senator Feinstein will meet once again to try and hash out some kind of a narrow measure to address this. They had a meeting last week where I was told, one Democratic member stepped in and said, hey you two are not that far apart, but when I was briefed afterwards they said, what does this tell you about the potentially toxic nature

of this as a political issue that Senator Cruz is desperate to try and get something done because he does not want this hanging over him for the next five months.

One quick thing guys I wanted mention is also the role of due process in all of this. If you saw over the weekend there was a Houston lawyer who was quoted saying that there is something diabolical going on at the border, when you talk about due process, that fathers and mothers are being dangled – there being given a dangle to say, hey give up your right to claim asylum and we'll reunify you with your child. Well how exactly is that happening if we don't have an accounting of where their children are and the prospect here that these parents, like you guys said, are being deported without their children, how many orphans are [inaudible] waiting? Because the President himself when he tweeted this weekend, he was just confirming what's already happening. He's told even Ted Cruz, I don't want more judges.

**Brzezinski:** Yeah, and that hatred he is spreading on the internet through his tweets, you just wonder, Joe, every day that goes by he digs deeper into a hole along with his administration and Republicans who support him and God forbid one of these children dies in custody – dies on our watch as the United States is holding them hostage, or gets severely ill, God forbid, at this point –

**Scarborough:** I think that's why there are people inside the Department of HHS that are panicking, that are trying to figure out where the children are, how they put it together. But the problem is you have an administration, Mr. Mayor, that is doing everything they can – a President specifically, not an administration, because everyone inside the White House tells us, they know this is a disastrous policy.

It's the President and Stephen Miller. Everybody else thinks this is an absolute disaster but let's look at Ted Cruz. Ted Cruz is talking about sending more lawyers down to the border. That actually if you only have 20 days right now under current law enforced, that's actually the correct answer, get the lawyers down there, let them process the claims, let them reunite with the children, and send them back to where they came from if that is in fact what the judge is going to rule.

**Mayor:** That's exactly right.

**Scarborough:** And yet you have the President who goes out of his way to cut Ted Cruz off at the knees and say that's not what we need, we need no judges.

**Mayor:** And Joe look – we should recognize there has been a bipartisan outcry here. I want to look at the positive in this. There have been a number of Republicans who've come forward. There have been faith leaders, both more liberal and more conservative, come forward and said this is not American. To be fair to all past administrations, Democrat and Republican, they did not deny people the basic right to seek asylum. This is aberrant and we have to treat it as aberrant, reminds me of the reality we faced in McCarthyism when there was a defining moment where people said this is no longer –

**Scarborough:** Enough.

**Mayor:** An acceptable reality in America. So some of that I think is happening here but to your core point, there is no question, you can't reunify these families if there aren't lawyers to defend the folks who came here seeking asylum and judges to make sense of the cases. You don't put that in the equation, then that chance, tragically, of permanent orphans is a very real thing, and secondly there is no concern in this policy for the health and wellbeing of the children, their physical health, their mental health. The folks here in New York City who received these children, they said to us, there weren't – there was no plan to take care of them, there was no plan to make sure they got to hospitals. We had to come in as New York City and provide that support. Otherwise a lot of these kids, that trauma I discussed, was going untreated and was going to grow.

**Barnicle:** At its very basic root, do you know whether we know, whether the caregivers know the name of this nine-month-old baby?

**Mayor:** I don't know in that case. I do know, the caregivers said, if a kid does not have a note in their pocket, and they have depend on the bureaucracy to get them the information about the parents and how to reach them, that's something you can't depend on. That's the truth. That they don't know in some cases how to reach the parents or any other family member and its catch as catch can, and that kind of lack of humanity, not the folks up here trying their best, and I agree with Joe, not the folks even in the federal bureaucracy who care and are shocked themselves, but the notion that the President and people around could come up with a policy, that lack of human concern for children and babies – and maybe the President thinks if they are a different skin color, they are less human, but you know what, most Americans don't think that way. Most Americans see these as children, they think through the perspective of their own children, they'd never want this happening to their own family. It shouldn't happen to any other family.

**Scarborough:** You know, and by the way, just side note, the President lied again about Ted Cruz who he said at the rally that Cruz wanted 5,000 more judges going to the border, it was 375. Of course he also accused Ted Cruz's father of being part of the assassination of JFK and mocked Ted Cruz's wife's looks. So this is straight in line with what Donald Trump does all the time. But despite that, Mr. Mayor, in closing, talk about why you're still optimistic. Charles Krauthammer, I went back and looked at some of his columns, and Krauthammer said despite the aberrance of Donald Trump, despite the fact that he is shallow and beyond narcissistic, despite the fact that Krauthammer criticized Donald Trump reputedly, he still said are system of checks and balances work, quote, "the system lives".

**Mayor:** Yup.

**Scarborough:** You share that belief with Charles Krauthammer don't you?

**Mayor:** I do indeed and history teaches us it. If you go back to the agony of the McCarthy period, good people came forward, including in our military, crucially, and said enough is enough. Good people in the media played a crucial role. You go to the pain of Vietnam and Watergate, we saw an amazing convergence of leaders, Republican and Democrat, so there's a pattern here. Both sides coming forward and saying it's a moral crisis, this is does not represent American values. By the way all of that ran through the question of transparency and openness in our government. In all those crisis our government was lying to us and withholding information, people on both sides of the aisle demanded the truth and it finally broke through.

The crisis with these children it is striking a human and moral chord and I think it's very powerful, a lot of the evangelical leaders, including some who are quite conservative, saying wait a minute this is an entirely different reality because now if we have a sense of family as the core of our society, this is violating our core values and this transcends partisanship. And you're seeing it from folks who are leaders, who maybe have been quiet on some other issues, but they are not being quite on this one. So I think what we have here is an unexpected defining moment and people are seeing it in human terms and that's when the dam starts to break. Remember, President Trump may have 40 percent of the country that generally agrees with him on any given day, but how about the other 60 percent? That's the pathway forward, the folks who want an America that is respectful and inclusive and humane, that's the American majority. I believe it.

**Brzezinski:** Mayor Bill de Blasio, thank you very much –

**Scarborough:** Thank you so much, Mr. Mayor.

**Barnicle:** Don't forget to vote tomorrow.

**Mayor:** Yes sir.

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