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**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO AND COMMISSIONER O'NEILL DELIVER
REMARKS AT THE NYPD GRADUATION CEREMONY**

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Thank you. Well, I want to say two words that you have been waiting to hear for a long time and you have earned – congratulations, officers.

[Applause]

This is not an easy thing to accomplish. This took years and years of hard work, of focus, and commitment. You know that there are many, many people who would have loved to be sitting where you are right now. But you were the best of the best, you went the distance, and this is a day to celebrate all of you.

[Applause]

I want to thank and commend all who are represented here on the dias. I want to particularly thank the leadership of the NYPD, Commissioner O'Neill and First Deputy Commissioner Tucker, and Chief Monahan for having done so much to make this department even greater. I want to thank our partners in government who also have done very, very important works in terms of making this a safer city. I want to thank the District Attorney of the Bronx Darcel Clark and the Chair of the Public Safety Committee in the City Council Donovan Richards. I want to thank and acknowledge the President of the BPA Patrick Lynch as well.

Everyone is here in common cause today because we recognize what this graduation means. It means the NYPD continues to get stronger. A new generation of talented, committed public servants joining the greatest police force in the world. And I want to emphasize this, you are not just joining a police force, you are joining the greatest police force in the world.

[Applause]

And you know that when you're at the academy you were put through the toughest of tests. You were given the best training. You were held to the highest standards. So again it's a credit to you that you're sitting here today, but I also want to give some other credit where credit is due because none of us get to a point of success, like you've reached today, none of us get here

alone. Our family members, starting with our parents, are there with us every step along the way, give us the tools, give us the love, give us the support, friends, every loved one in our life who is there to make this kind of day happen. So I want to take a moment to acknowledge all of you and congratulate all of you as well.

[Applause]

So what does this graduation mean? It means 448 new guardians for this city. 448 new protectors who will be, in each and every community, seen as people who make a difference. And that's what neighborhood policing is all about, communities understanding the importance of our police and drawing ever closer to our police, and our police having a deeper connection with our communities. It makes a huge, huge difference and it's helped to make us safer. And you will be part of this extraordinary new approach that is reinventing how we police and making us safer while at the same time creating more trust and more mutual respect between our officers and our communities. More 'thank you's all around, something our officers always deserve. You will be part of this generation who forwards this progress and you are particularly well suited to the task. No class has ever received better training in our history.

And this is a class that truly looks like New York City. You hail from 41 different countries, you speak 45 different languages. You're going to be able to connect with every kind of New Yorker in every kind of community.

And I want to give you one example from this class that speaks volumes about today's NYPD, and about the ability of the NYPD to make a fundamental difference in the social fabric of this entire city. Because remember, the NYPD is one of the glues in New York City, one of the reasons this city holds together and works is our men and women in uniform.

Let me give you one example from this class. Officer Mikaeel Nasser. And I want to say something that's a little painful to hear. He was five-years-old when the tragedy and the horror of 9/11 occurred, and in that time, as a young boy, a woman walked up to Officer Nasser one day and told him literally go back to your country. Well here's the truth, Mikaeel Nasser's country is the United States of America.

[Applause]

And he is joining over 1,000 proud Muslim-American officers in the NYPD who serve all of us.

[Applause]

He's also an example of something I bet a lot of you are a part of as well, and it's a tremendous tradition in the NYPD of generation after generation from the same family continuing to serve and wear this uniform. In the case of Officer Nasser three cousins already have served before him and his father Detective Ahmed Nasser. Congratulations to the whole Nasser family.

[Applause]

In every class there are also a special group that I want to take a moment to honor, and ask you all to join me, because they are not just joining this police force to serve and protect us for years and years ahead, they have already served our nation. The 29 members of this class who served previously in our armed services. Let's thank all of them.

[Applause]

And I want to just say to all of you, you've answered a call to duty, you've made a noble choice. And it will play out every single day on the streets of this city. And you're going to do what people who maybe aren't as blessed with as much courage and resolve and strength as you would not know how to do. You will answer that call every time. When there is a problem, a crisis, a challenge, you'll say I'll be there. You won't look away. When there is danger you'll say I will go into the danger.

You won't go away from it because that's what you are made of and we honor you for that. You are joining an extraordinary organization made up of people of similar caliber and that's why I always say this is a winning team, you are joining a winning team, you're joining a championship team. And the proof is visible to all of us because of the men and women of the NYPD we are without question the safest big city in America. That is something to celebrate.

And that took a lot of hard work. 2017 was the safest year in the history of this city. I like to give it a really clear example and use the example of the last time we had as few homicides as we had in 2017 – the last time there was fewer homicide in New York City, the Dodgers were playing at Ebbets Field in Brooklyn. That gives you a sense of just how much this department has achieved.

You are joining that winning team. But here is the best part – there is no one up here who is resting on their laurels. I've spent over four years, side by side with so many of the people on this dais. They are not resting on their laurels. They do not know how to stop getting better. And I am happy to tell you that already in 2018, we are ahead of 2017's pace, 2018 is on pace to be the safest year in the history of New York City.

[Applause]

The last thing I want to say to you is really especially for your families and your loved ones – that we understand, every single one of us up here understand that we have a sacred responsibility to all of these good men and women now wearing this uniform. We have a responsibility to help make sure that they are all safe. That's why they got the very best training that has ever been provided to NYPD officers. That's why they will have the greatest and most modern technology that any officers have ever had. They will have the most advance gear to protect them.

And also I want to thank the City Council because over the last few years we have added an additional 2,000 officers on patrol – another way of keeping our officers safe. We owe it to you to keep you safe. And that's a sacred responsibility for all of us. I want to tell you this is a really good day for this city. I want to thank you all individually for the choice you made and again a choice that will have such positive ramifications for all of the rest of us, 8.6 million people. And

you will have a day and maybe many days when you change someone's life for the better, where you change a family's life, where you save a life, where you do something that will have lasting ramifications for years and years ahead. What an extraordinary opportunity to do good, and I thank you all for the choice you have made. Congratulations officers. God bless you all.

[Applause]

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Police Commissioner James P. O'Neill: Morning everybody. Hey, didn't you just finish six months of training? Right? How come nobody is smiling?

[Laughter]

Okay here we go. Alright, keep that smile on your face. Morning everyone, thanks for being here. Thanks Ben – one person said good morning to me.

[Laughter]

The First Deputy Commissioner.

[Laughter]

So on the behalf of the leadership team assembled up here and the entire New York City Police Department, welcome to our recruit graduation ceremony. And to our newest police officers, welcome to the NYPD.

I'm actually jealous, it's been, 35 years ago sitting in those seats and what you are about to embark upon is truly special. I know you have worked long and hard, not just in over the last six months, but to get on this job. I know some of you it was two, three, four years – it's a long time to wait. I'm sure there were other opportunities, but you were patient and you knew what you wanted to do. I would like to thank you for that because this is – what you are about to embark on is the job of a lifetime. I've been a cop for almost 36 years now and I've never look back. What you get to do each and every day, the difference you get to make in one person's life, in two person's life, maybe two peoples' life, a whole family – not too many people get to do that.

This is a unique opportunity. You have to use it wisely. This is a noble profession and sometimes that word noble is over used but not in this case. It fits, it fits perfectly. Just think about what you are going to go out and do tomorrow. Think about what you are going to do for the next 22 years. And I bet a lot of you stay around after those 22 years. That's how much you are going to love it. Some of you probably wanted to be cops for your whole lives. Some of you maybe just made that decision recently. Once you get to your commands and get to meet the police officers, get to go out on patrol and see what life is like in the city, around the clock, every day of the year, you really understand that this is a great choice that you made. A lot of young faces sitting in front of me right now. You don't know what the city was like back in the 1990's, the 1980's when there were 2,200 homicides, 5,000 shootings in a year. In 2017 there were 790 shootings, there were

292 murders and now in April of 2018 we are down another 19 shootings, down another 13 murders from this day one year ago.

You might be sitting here and you might be thinking those are just stats. They are not. They are not statistics, they are human lives. They are families kept intact. One less person shot, one less person killed, one less person robbed. And that's the legacy of the NYPD, so when you put the uniform on and you go out on patrol, remember that. This hasn't been an easy road for the NYPD. It's been a long and difficult road, a lot of sacrifice, a lot of lives lost and a lot of people hurt, a lot of missed opportunities with families. This isn't a regular job.

You're going to be working 24 hours a day and working on weekends. As a matter of fact, there's a good chance you're going to be working on Fourth of July, Thanksgiving, New Year's Eve –

[Laughter]

And whatever other holiday might come about. But every single day you're out there helping people making a difference in people's lives. That's what special about the jobs that we have. You get to see everything. You get to experience everything. And you'll see what truly great people there are in the city.

You get to see how much New Yorkers care about this city and how much New Yorkers really do care about this police department. Don't be fooled. People like cops. They understand what our job is. They understand how vital we are to this city so no matter what you do, no matter what role you end up in make sure you understand what your number one priority is and that's to fight crime and to keep the people of this great city safe.

That's it. Pure and simple. That's the magic formula. You took this job for one reason and one reason only. You took it because you want to make a difference. You took it because you want to do good. I guess that's two reason.

[Laughter]

And each day you go out on patrol, make sure you focus on that whether it's one person you encounter someone down on their luck or whether it's a family, even if it's someone you might have to arrest – treat them with dignity, treat them with respect. It'll come back to you a-hundred-fold.

Your safety as police officers and the safety of the people you're sworn to protect are deeply connected. So listen to people's stories. Respect their cultures. Work to address their concerns and you'll find that the trust you'll earn will benefit everyone.

Sometimes it's as simple as you're walking down the street or riding in the subway, to say hello and that hello will come back to you. Not all the time but that's fine. Work on it. As a police officer you want to get to know the people you're sworn to protect and serve.

Help them understand what we do. It won't always be easy but that oath you took before, keep that in mind when you go about each day's work. Think about the words you recited, what they mean, and let that guide you.

So we're here today to congratulate you on completing your recruit training and to tell you what a great career you're going to have, and it will be great. I can assure you of that.

I also want to talk with your families and friends for a minute, to the moms, dads, grandparents, siblings, husbands, wives, and everyone else who came to support our graduates today. Thank you. We always say that cops – that we have the greatest jobs in the world but you, our officer's loved ones, you have the hardest jobs, the most difficult jobs.

And it doesn't matter whether the person you're here for today is the first member of your family to become of the cop or they're the latest in a longstanding family tradition of public service.

Either way, I know the mixture of feelings that you're feeling right now. I know that you're proud. I know that you're excited. I know you're also apprehensive, you're afraid, and everything in between.

And I want you to know this – your family just got a whole lot bigger. You may have walked into this theater with one son, daughter, niece, nephew, brother, or sister but you're walking out with 36,000 more.

Now, as with any family, we're going to have some ups and downs, some good days, some bad days as I said before but I can tell you from my own experiences, when I got on in January of 1983, the really good days vastly outnumber the bad ones and through it all, we're going to be here for each other.

There are several groups here today who already know exactly what I'm talking about. Let me make mention of one of them – the Tarpey family. This is some story. They've been New York City cops for five generations. Police Officer Daniel Tarpey, who graduates today, has long heard the tales of comradery and sacrifice as described by his father, his grandfather who heard similar stories from Daniel's great grandfather and his great, great grandfather before that.

Today, a proud legacy is maintained and I know that you all have some very high hopes so, no pressure Daniel. Not a problem at all. It's only five generations.

[Laughter]

Congratulations on your accomplishments today, Daniel, and let's give him a round of applause, and the whole family.

[Applause]

I know how cops like to be singled out so I'm sure you really appreciated that, Daniel, and so did your company. They'll never let you forget it.

And I think there's a reason why families like Daniel's choose to continue the tradition of public service in the NYPD because when officers swear that oath we spoke about, the NYPD swears an oath to those officers too.

This department and this city promise to honor them, to protect them, and to never forget their commitment to the people of New York. And always those promises extend to the loved ones as well.

It's my job as Police Commissioner and the job of all of us sitting up here on the stage right now to make sure every officer gets home safely after every tour.

That's our pledge to each of you and there's nothing we take more seriously than that. So, thank you all again for supporting our graduates because when you support them, you're supporting the work of the entire department.

And now, to our newest NYPD cops – let this sink in for a minute. You're NYPD cops. Let it sink in but never take it lightly. Never forget who you are and what you do, and what you mean to the people of this great city.

New York is the safest big city in the United States because of the hard work of the men and women wearing NYPD uniforms out on the street today as well as the thousands of brave and talented cops who came before you.

You're here now because you want to be part of something larger than yourselves, because you believe in the possibility of an even safer city and even safer country. When you leave this theater today, the connections you'll make in the neighborhoods you'll patrol and the relationships you'll develop will accomplish that goal.

You'll keep people safe, equally important, you'll make people feel safe too. And there is a distinction. To achieve true public safety it takes everyone doing their part.

This is actually one of the most exciting times in American law enforcement because New York policing is redefining what it means to protect the city and its inhabitants. Our neighborhood policing philosophy which is a crime fighting strategy first and foremost is revolutionizing how we interact with the people we serve.

What counts more than anything, though is your character, your integrity, and your professionalism. Prior to today, all your experiences were different and the path that led you here is unique only to you.

We can learn so much from each other and all of it makes us better cops. That's why working in such a diverse police department is a huge advantage for us. We learn about our fellow cops like Police Officer Jessica Zhang who came to the United States from China just six years ago, became a citizen two years ago, and today is now the first member of her family to join the NYPD.

She's not the first cop, though, because like the Tarpeys, who I mentioned earlier, Jessica's family has a long tradition of public service. Her father, grandmother, two uncles, a niece, and a cousin are all police officers in China. I know they are extremely proud of Jessica and all she's accomplished here. Congratulations, Jessica. Welcome to the New York City Police Department.

[Applause]

And then there are cops like Police Officer Daniel Orleans. Growing up in Brazil, Daniel was the victim of a home invasion as a young boy. That would be traumatizing for anyone but for Daniel, it put him on a path to become a force for positive change. He knew what it was like to be a victim. And he knew the problems that violent crimes caused in his community.

And he also knew that one day he wanted to be part of the solution. So after he came to the United States more than a decade ago, he began a career of public service that ultimately brought him to this theater today.

And now he has the opportunity to help people and to make a real difference in our city. So, let's give Daniel a round of applause too.

[Applause]

I want to thank the dedicated instructors and staff of the Police Academy, our Train Bureau, our Personnel Bureau, and our Candidate Assessment Division.

And finally to our graduates, congratulations. You'll remember today for the rest of your lives. And remember this too – cops are special people but what makes them special is that they're ordinary people who often find themselves doing extraordinary things.

It's my great privilege to join with you as we make our way forward together, watch out for each other, always stay safe, and always love your families.

Thank you very much.

[Applause]

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