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TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO APPEARS LIVE ON HOT 97'S EBRO IN THE MORNING

Ebro Darden: I did not tell the audience that we had a special guest coming at 8:30 am this morning because I wasn't sure if he was going to show up for us. We haven't heard from him in a long time. He's had other huge issues to deal with in New York City. The Mayor, Bill de Blasio, is back on Ebro in the Morning.

Peter Rosenberg: Former friend of the show, Mayor de Blasio, ladies and gentlemen.

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Hold on, Rosenberg. Rosenberg, how soon you forget, what's that about?

Rosenberg: It hasn't been soon. I haven't seen you in months.

Darden: He felt snubbed.

Rosenberg: I missed you. You haven't come on in months and months.

Darden: I got to say, I got to say, Mayor, we are – for the last six months you have been, dare I say, inundated to the highest levels that any public official could be.

Mayor: [Inaudible] Rosenberg, would you share that information with him?

Darden: We talked about it, but we did feel, with our audience being both young, somewhat irresponsible, as well as Black and brown, and having the most diverse audience of any media outlet in the city, that we would have heard from you when this thing was at a fever pitch. But I recognize we're not seen as a news source, we're just a piece of the community, but we did feel some type of way. I got to tell you that.

Mayor: Ebro, I want you to know, obviously I've felt very, truly, like, connected to everyone here and that we've had extraordinary conversations. So, I certainly – I didn't mean to send that message and we were all trying to deal with so many things, but here we are. And I look forward, for the next 15 months, to being here regularly.

Darden: Well, I want to get right into COVID-19, the lessons you've learned as everyone has, right, because everybody made mistakes early on based on the information that was available. But here we are today trying to make sure that we, as a city, don't go above a one percent infection rate, even though there's areas, there's pockets that are higher than that. The message right now is obviously continue to wear a mask, continue to social distance. And you're being

very strict, and even out here giving out fines, I heard \$150,000 in fines were given out over the weekend to people who weren't wearing masks or socially distant, etcetera, etcetera. What details can you share with us?

Mayor: Yeah, Ebro, this is really a decisive week for New York City. I want to emphasize that for everyone, that this is a week where if we all do what we have been able to do for months now, and we really – the city fought back this disease. It really is something that everyone should be proud of because we were the epicenter and we got to a much better place over the summer. But we've got to do that again or else there is the danger of a second wave. And you see around the world and you see around this country, a full blown second wave. Literally, it was beaten back and now people are managing to, unfortunately, not learn those lessons and act on those lessons from the spring. And I got to tell you, there's plenty of people in government around this country who are being irresponsible. But here in this city, people have been really devoted to doing things right. And we've got this week next week, absolutely crucial if we're going to stop a second wave. We're doing a lot of enforcement. We're doing a lot of education, free masks, a lot of testing. And I want to emphasize, everyone who hasn't been tested lately should get tested whichever neighborhood you're in because the testing is the thing that helped us turn around. And we got to get people back to being tested, and not ignore that reality, but really engage it.

Darden: You guys are doing mandatory testing in schools –

Mayor: We're doing mandatory testing in schools. And I got to tell you, the first day we did 56 schools on Friday, we got one positive out of all those schools, thousands of tests. The schools, Ebro, had been a really good part of this. Very, very positive what we're seeing, that we are not having a problem, thank God, with the spread in the schools. In fact, the schools have been unusually safe because everyone's wearing a mask, kids and adults. Because of social distance, you've got 10 kids in a classroom in a New York City public school. Imagine like that's something we can never believe, but it's happening now. Everything is being cleaned, lots of testing. So, the schools – the fact that all of our schools are open, the fact that they are safe is a huge step forward for the city. But the thing we got to do now is recognize we've got a danger. It's in certain parts of Brooklyn and Queens, but we can stop it if everyone works hard right now, right now to beat this thing back

Darden: Now, do you think that maybe early on, maybe a few months ago these communities specifically ultra-Orthodox and Hasidic communities that seem to be the most outspoken and vocal against masks, demonstrating in streets last week and burning, I don't know what they were burning, boxes of masks or whatever the hell was going on. Should there have been more of a heavy handed approach with these communities that refused to wear masks earlier? Or was there one that we didn't know about?

Mayor: Ebro, what we try to do in every community where we saw some uptick was heavy education, outreach, masks distribution, testing. We did that in Sunset Park in Brooklyn. That was the first place we really saw an uptick in the latter part of the summer. That kind of, you know, intensive effort really worked. We had an issue in Soundview in the Bronx. We did the same thing, it worked. We had an issue in Southeast Queens, it worked. Then we started to see an issue in Borough Park in Brooklyn. We've tried the same exact approach, multiple languages.

And it seemed, for a period of time, like it was going to have the same outcome, but then it didn't. And obviously we saw too many people not following the rules. At that point, we started to ramp up not only the outreach, but the enforcement, but unfortunately, we found this was something that had spread it not only in New York City, but the whole metropolitan area within the community.

But the bottom line now is we're out there saying to people, you just really have to take these masks seriously and the social distancing. If we have to enforce it, if we have to give fines – we've obviously shown we're willing to, but I'm hoping, even though this is a tough moment, I'm hoping this is kind of the breakthrough moment where folks come to the conclusion once and for all that until there's a vaccine, everyone's got to follow these rules.

Rosenberg: Do you get the sense that you're – we've had an impact in getting communities like that to understand? Because I mean, it's one thing, if in Soundview you have people who are moving around and making bad decisions, simply maybe for lack of knowledge, were not paying enough attention –

Darden: Or just being young and irresponsible.

Rosenberg: Yeah, just being young and irresponsible. But then you have people who are making an active decision to be like, no, I'm not doing this. Are you able to see that we're being able to convince those people of anything? Or is this a lost cause?

Mayor: No, it's not at all a lost cause. Look, there are some people who are doing this ideologically. You're absolutely right. I mean, we've seen this reality around the city and not just in those communities in Brooklyn and Queens. We're seeing it in some other places too, where people are philosophically saying, you know, I'm not going to wear a mask, some of that encouraged by President Trump obviously.

Rosenberg: And often it's Trump supporters who are doing that, for sure.

Darden: Well, it's politicized. The mask has become a political statement, which is ridiculous and idiotic.

Mayor: It's really strange. It's really strange that something that's – you know, I was thinking back a hundred years ago, 1918, there was a pandemic in this country and, you know, a horrible flu pandemic and people wore masks all the time. It was a hundred years ago, and they didn't think it was like some political oppression to wear a mask, it was just common sense to protect people. And I think that's where the vast majority of people are. But I think some folks need a wakeup call and, you know, there's a lot of urban legend running through certain communities about, oh, we have herd immunity already, or, you know, the disease isn't going to affect us. People now have learned the hard way, that's not true.

Darden: Well, you can't have herd immunity without a vaccine. You just can't even [inaudible] –

Mayor: The whole herd immunity thing just has proven not to be true in this country anywhere. And so, you know, I think it took a moment like this for a lot of people to realize they've got to – you know, if they want to keep their community going, if they want, you know, businesses open and schools open and all, they've got to wear the mask. And, obviously, there's going to be consequences. I do think for most people, this will be the change [inaudible]. For some people, it may be an ideological statement, but I don't think that's the majority by any stretch.

Laura Stylez: Speaking of businesses, what's going on with small businesses, specifically restaurants, when it comes to outdoor dining, I know it's going to get cold pretty soon. And I don't see that being effective, the outdoor dining situation. I mean, it's going to be cold outside. So, I'm just thinking about all the restaurants that have been struggling here in New York City, you know, what makes us New York City.

Mayor: Exactly. Laura, that's such an important point because, you know, we've got – the restaurant world in New York City is part of our identity. It's part of our life and our culture. And also, hundreds of thousands of people are employed in restaurants. So, we've got 10,000 restaurants in our Open Restaurant program. That proved to be really positive, that were outdoors over these last months. A lot of them have been able to, you know, stay alive because of it, bring back a lot of employees, it's been good for the heart and soul of the city. We are making that permanent now. We're saying that outdoor dining needs to be a permanent reality in New York City. And that means that for the restaurants that have set up those outdoor areas or anyone that still wants to, they can create a permanent structure in effect. They can create something ongoing and then they can put in what they need to make it work during the colder months –

Darden: Those space heaters or whatever.

Mayor: Yeah, and we have very specific rules about what they can use where, but the point being now it's something people can plan on not just for this year, but going forward for years, that a lot of restaurants now have actually a whole new opportunity, thank God. They have a lot more space they'll be able to deal with. They know it's going to be there. And then the thing we've done with these Open Streets, which has proven to be a really beautiful thing, where, you know, on weekends in the warmer weather, we've opened up streets, closed them to traffic, opened them to restaurants, opened them to become like places where people just hang out. Restaurants have been able to put out a lot more seating. That's going to be a great thing going forward. But I think, Laura, to your question, that the notion of, for those who want to do permanent outdoor dining, they now have the permission to do it. And, obviously, they can do some indoor dining. And then by the spring, we all want to hope and pray that the situation has turned with a vaccine and all, and the restaurants will get back to normal, but they'll also know for years and years to come, that they'll have that outdoor as part of their reality going forward.

Darden: Mayor de Blasio, personally for you, how hard has all of this been? You live in Brooklyn, this is your city. It's not like you're someone who just came from out of town and got the job. You are watching New York go through a fundamental shift in – I mean, you just spoke about restaurants, businesses that will never survive and be able to return again, employment, jobs that may never come back again. I read an article, I don't know if it's true, but someone was saying of the businesses and the real estate, I think there is an under ten percent capacity in a lot

of the high rises that were office spaces because people are working from home. Or you hear about New York City is over, you hear these things. I just want to hear from you, A, personally, how are you doing and how are you feeling in all of this and, B, what is the truth about this New York City is over, New York City ending kind of drum that's being beaten?

Mayor: Yeah, Ebro, I appreciate both questions. So, personally, look, I'm someone who feels a real empathy, and it has been very painful being out in communities around the city, hearing about what people have gone through and the people in my life, people I know, people I work with, there's so much loss. It is very painful. And I try to remember my job is to keep going for everyone else. And I feel a lot of pain right now, too, but I have to work through that because, you know, if we all stopped too long, if you will, to think about what we've been through, it might be paralyzing, and we can't let that happen. So, I have felt a lot of what has happened to people. Every family has felt it in different ways. And when I look at the situation of the city, I mean, I feel the confusion folks are feeling, the fear they are feeling about the future. It's so intense, but at the same time there's been amazing acts of kindness and compassion. I have seen so much goodness, I really have, that has sort of given me a lot of strength too and a lot of a sense of perseverance, just so many people who found a way to help each other. And, you know, you go back to the worst of this with the health care workers who worked just unbelievable, how they stuck with it. And then people came out in love and support for them. And, you know, it has given me some inspiration. So, I have really seen – I just think New York City has this amazing ability to find strength. You know, people find strength and people back each other up. And I think there's some other places maybe where there isn't the same kind of sense of perseverance, but here it's amazing.

I mean, remember, I always make the parallel of what we went through after 9/11, things felt incredibly uncertain and, sort of, folks found strength. They found strength after Hurricane Sandy, so many situations. And so, now, you know, when I hear people talk about New York being over, it makes me so angry. It's just, to me, it is wrong on every level. It's disrespectful to the people in New York City. Anyone who says that doesn't understand the people of New York City does not – maybe some elite people like to say that because that's their attitude, but they do not understand the working people. They do not understand New Yorkers if they say that because New Yorkers just would never give up. It's not part of – it's not in our DNA to give up.

Rosenberg: Are you seeing, like, a lot of, you know, there's been a lot made about places like the Upper West Side are out of control and things are worse than they ever were, crime is up. Are you seeing any real indicators? Obviously, we do know there's some neighborhoods where some people have moved out. Midtown has seen some of that, etcetera. I've heard Tribeca is kind of quiet. But is there any sort of – are there facts behind any of this stuff, more crime, etcetera in the city?

Mayor: Most of what you're hearing, I truly believe is – does not represent our city, is not accurate because overall this city has managed in a heroic way. The people of the city have been heroic. I mean, this is part of what makes me so angry. Who puts down a group of heroic people who fought off a disease? We were the epicenter. We overcame it. We became one of the safest places in the country. Like everyone acknowledges, we were clearly the epicenter. And then we were clearly one of the safest places in the country. Who did that? New Yorkers did that. Who on

Earth would want to put that down? I mean, I just don't understand that. And so, now are there places where we've had more crime? Yes. Everywhere in the country has had that, that problem and that reality. Things came unglued. You know, this is what we have to be honest about when there's no work, there's no schools for a long time, houses of worship were closed. Things came unglued for a period of time. And that was true all over the country. And, of course, that has now been bought back on a lot of levels. Our schools are open. Jobs are coming back. You see a whole better reality. So, yeah, we had some trouble, but we're fighting back the trouble. But then yeah, some people are leaving and – but the vast, vast majority are staying, and new people will come in because it's still New York. It's always going to be New York. And, you know, you see new investment coming in right now.

You have these big companies that are saying, wait a minute, we're betting on New York. And we're talking about – let me tell you something. One other thing, we have a vision, I have a vision of future New York City as the health care capital of the world, because we went through the worst and we overcame it. We have something to teach the world. We understand that you need a focus on public health, and you need a social justice lens to health. There needs to be guaranteed health care for all. We're doing that here in New York City. There needs to be whole new ways to fight future pandemics. We're creating those strategies right here. We have the potential to go even farther than we've been before by being the place on the Earth that creates the best solutions for health care for all, for every kind of person. Because what we learned in this crisis was massive disparity –

Darden: That's right.

Mayor: Which was very painful, massive disparity, according to race and income –

Darden: And some of this, we knew –

Mayor: [Inaudible] place that overcomes that and shows others how to overcome it.

Darden: These disparities, we've talked about, de Blasio. We've had you on and you've been vocal about them. But now, this lifted up the nasty skirt. This lifted up the curtain so that the world could see how truly dysfunctional many things, not only in New York City, but in our nation are with regard to these disparities. And speaking of those, and social justice, what was your response when you found out that the police union endorsed Donald Trump? What kind of disrespectful blatantly divisive move was that?

Rosenberg: When they've never done it before [inaudible] –

Darden: It's never happened before, but right now, right now, with everything going on, that's what you want to do. What was your response?

Mayor: Yeah, I was angry, but not surprised. And I think one of the things I hope comes from all of this is understanding what has happened with some of the police unions, because for a lot of us, this has been a long fight. You know, we just, the last few days we lost Joyce Dinkins, who was our first lady of this city. And I say that for a reason. She and Mayor Dinkins – and I worked

in that administration, Chirlane worked in that administration – they were trying to change reality between police and community and trying to reform police in the middle of all that, the middle of his mayoralty, the PBA, the patrolman's union, had a protest, which turned into basically a civilian riot right in front of City Hall, and attacked Mayor Dinkins in the most overtly vicious racist terms. These were police officers off duty because the union was encouraging that kind of negativity. And to this day, that union encourages division and negativity.

By the way, it does not represent, I fundamentally believe this, it does not represent the day-to-day men and women of NYPD who are very different than they were decades ago. It's now a majority people of color police force, but the union politics has not connected to that reality. So, endorsing a president who has attacked people of color, who is an overt racist, who is trying to destroy democracy, that was very painful. I heard from a lot of people in communities that they were very pained by that. And they associate it with the police as an institution. I had to say, wait a minute, do not mistake a right-wing union, that doesn't even represent its membership, do not mistake that for a police force that is trying to make real changes and real reforms. It's two different things, but I understand how people have trouble [inaudible] –

Darden: We don't know that we don't know that. I don't know – I didn't know. Like, I assume when I see that, that unless I hear from officers saying that doesn't represent me, that is not who I am. We don't hear from those officers. So, the assumption is, when we don't hear from those officers is it's okay.

Mayor: And, Ebro, as usual, you're raising one of the bigger issues. And I appreciate you for that. Because this is a conversation that doesn't happen in this city and it needs to. And I've got 15 more months and I'm going to try and be very blunt about a lot of the things we have to grapple with because I've been doing this for a long time. And I see the same problems being repeated. The men and women of the NYPD, I think the vast majority of them just go about their job, they don't get involved in the politics, they're going to serve people regardless of politics or who they are. But then their union represents that there's one monolithic view for all police officers. And you're right, you don't hear a counter view. And we need to hear from everyday officers who don't share that view. We need some forum for that so people don't end up with a misimpression that one union leader, one union endorses Donald Trump, that that must represent every officer and their values. It doesn't. Way over 30,000 officers and, again, majority people of color, a huge percentage live in New York City. They are all different people with different views. And then this horrible notion spreads that, you know, it must represent the whole police force. That's just not right, but we need to figure out how to surface that bigger reality, so people don't get that misunderstanding.

Darden: Do you believe that the NYPD still has a racism issue or a white supremacist issue? Do you believe that some people operating within the NYPD still represent those ideals?

Mayor: I don't think there's very many anymore. There are some, but I'll tell you this much, the leadership over – it's been seven years I've been an office, there has been a very systematic effort to bring forward reformers, to bring forward more people of color leadership up and down the ranks everywhere, precinct commander and chiefs and everywhere, and to change the nature of

policing. And the training is really the crucial part of this. Every officer now is trained with the implicit bias training, de-escalation training. That didn't happen before these recent years. And I think you're seeing at the beginning of a culture change, but there needs to be a lot more. We have a lot more to do to improve the culture of the NYPD, to connect it more deeply with communities. That's what we've been doing with neighborhood policing as a philosophy, but it needs to go farther undoubtedly. And I think it's a very – look, when I was in City Hall with Mayor Dinkins, an extraordinarily different police force than it is today. Then, if you had asked me that question then, I would have said, I fear there were a lot of people, unfortunately, who had some of those views. Today, I do not feel that at all. Today, I think it's a much better police force, but there's still real work to do.

Darden: And the last question on just policing and crime in the city, where there's clearly been an increase in crime, when you have unemployment, when you have people on lock down, when you have youth programs without funding, when you have all of these things going on, there's going to be an increase in crime. That's just how it always works. Then you factor in COVID-19 and these other things. Courts were closed. How much of the increase in crime is tied to this cash bail conversation, and where are you on this new law of how cash bail is handled? Because a lot of us, regular folks, like at least me, like I would say to myself, well, if they set a bail, you could have gotten out on bail because that's what bail is. But they would set the bail so high, so that poor people or always people who had financial issues, etcetera, couldn't achieve that bail figure. So, they were stuck on Rikers. Now with the new cash bail laws, some people are able to get out and you're hearing these stories of these are the people contributing to these crime stats. What's the facts there?

Mayor: It's a powerful question. So, first of all, bail reform was necessary, and I supported bail reform. I think the original version of bail reform needed some improvement, honestly, and then some of that was done in April this year. And I think it got to be balanced in a much better fashion. But the fundamental notion that it was unacceptable for someone to languish on Rikers, because they didn't have a small amount of money, that had to be addressed and that was addressed. And that was a real victory in terms of social justice. The problem at the same time was there were some unintended consequences. It's not the main issue here. What you said was the main issue that everything got unglued in people's lives, there was incredible frustration and emotion because people were cooped up and getting really frustrated and angry, and the courts weren't functioning. That's the ultimate part of the accountability in criminal justice is there's a court system and there could be some consequences. And once there was no consequence possible, it undermined everything. And people started – it's a very small number of people, but some people acted as if they could get away with things without consequence. The court system is coming back now. The police are now able to see follow through. If they go out and arrest someone with a gun, there's now follow through on it in a way that wasn't possible when the court system was shut down. I think you're seeing things engage really steadily now, and that's going to help us a lot. But the – to the core of your question, bail reform was necessary. I think it needed to be calibrated a little differently than the original. I think the changes made in April achieve a lot of that. And going forward, the central question is going to be about just re-gluing things, getting people back to work, getting people back to school, creating the normalcy in life, and the expectations again, and the hope again. And then for those very few who commit crimes showing that there are consistent consequences.

Darden: And if in this last spike of COVID cases, we do not see an increase in death numbers, how does the conversation change moving into late November and December, if we begin to understand a little bit more about where wearing a mask and social distancing plays into the death numbers? Because obviously if we see an increase, people get COVID, but deaths don't increase, doesn't that change the way we're having the conversation a little bit?

Mayor: Yeah, no, it's a very real honest question. We have not seen, thank God, as we've had this challenge these last few weeks, we've not seen as big a spike in hospitalizations as we saw in the past. And we have not seen that spike in deaths. And that is something we were very, very worried about. But we are far from out of the woods, Ebro. So, the first thing I'd say is with this disease, we can't act like any of us fully understand it because again, look at some parts of the world and some parts of the country that are having a pure second wave. The thing we're trying to stop, they couldn't stop. And now we're going to see what that means. And tragically, that could mean a lot of people die eventually. We don't know yet, but I think you're right, that right now the perception may be that it can't be as bad as it was in the past, so we don't have to be as disciplined or whatever. I would argue it this way. We actually – we beat this disease back in an extraordinary manner. We had the city under a one percent positive rate for quite a while. We have to get back to that. If people want their lives to come back, if they want their jobs to come back, we have to get back to that.

So, we have every reason to be motivated, to wear a mask and to practice social distancing and to do all those basic simple things. It really came down to what everyday people did. It's not so much about government edicts. It's about everyday people being bought in and just following some real simple ideas. But I think it's impossible to say we could never go back to a time where we're not losing a lot of people. We can't say that we don't know that. So, we have to be vigilant and we have to recognize it's a finite priceless, unlike some other crises in history that might have gone on for years and years. You know, we're hearing consistently from responsible scientists and health care people that at some point not too far into 2021, there is likely to be a vaccine and we have the ability, we're going to be talking about it these coming days about how to get that vaccine out quickly. That's where we got to stay focused on. Do we have five months, six months, seven months, eight months? I don't know exactly, but we have a limited period of time to hold it together and make sure we never see that kind of level of death again.

Darden: Mayor de Blasio, appreciate your time today. The next time we don't hear from you for six months, just know you're uninvited permanently.

Mayor: I'm not going to let that happen, Ebro. I want to make sure we all stay connected because I've really appreciated, over these years, these conversations. They have been, honestly, some of the best and most meaningful and most insightful of anything I've done publicly over the last seven years.

Darden: No, real talk. I'll tell you, real talk, I almost pulled up to Gracie Mansion and was like going to honk the horn outside the gate, like, yo, Chirlane holler at your man, he tripping, man. We ain't heard from him.

Rosenberg: You should've done [inaudible] –

Darden: Your mans is tripping.

[Laughter]

Mayor: Ebro, I would have just suggested you texted me, but that would have been another way to do it.

Rosenberg: Sometimes you have to pull up.

Darden: I got to pull up on the Avenue, man, if you don't remember.

Mayor: [Inaudible]

Darden: Brooklyn style. We got to bring Brooklyn over there to Gracie Mansion.

Mayor: I do appreciate your sense of drama there. But, listen, can I make one quick plug though?

Darden: Yes.

Mayor: The census. Listen, this is real simple, real quick. The Supreme Court said yesterday that we only have until tomorrow for people to sign up as part of the census.

Darden: Come on guys, fill out the goddamn census.

Mayor: And it's simple. So, anyone if you've not yet done the census, go to my2020census.gov, my2020census.gov. It takes 10 minutes. And by filling out the census, it is confidential. It gives New York City a better chance of getting its fair share of representation in Washington. There's billions and billions of dollars decided by how many people fill out the census. Think about it as if you fill out the census, you help bring home the bacon to New York City and to our people and to your community. But really, we need everyone to do it. We got 24 hours left.

Darden: Bill de Blasio. Thank you, man. [My2020census.gov](https://my2020census.gov), everybody.

Stylez: Thank you, Mayor.

Darden: Y'all know how we feel up here at Ebro in the Morning about the census. Fill out the goddamn census. Stop playing.

Mayor: Thank you. Take care, everyone.

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