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TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO DELIVERS REMARKS AT THE QUEENS MUSEUM TO PROMOTE THE CITY'S CULTURAL RECOVERY

Mayor Bill de Blasio: All right. Everybody – got a rowdy crowd back here. It's Queens, right. Everybody, I want to just say it is a joy to be here at Queens Museum. And see something so wonderful, so community based, it's about people, it's about community. This museum is legendary for connecting to Corona and other neighborhoods right around it, and really being a place for everyone. So, thank you for that. And we saw the great work of folks who are feeding the community with the food pantry, thank you, so necessary at this moment. It is a statement on the love and compassion of New York City. That since the beginning of this pandemic, we have provided 200 million free meals in this city, because we will not let any New Yorker go hungry. But it's also a sad statement, how much need there is out there. So, thank you to all the good people who made this work possible to feed your fellow members of the community, thank you.

And then to see this extraordinary work to help the people who need to have a livelihood, particularly immigrant women who are building up their own businesses, controlling their own destinies. That is a beautiful thing. I want to thank Christine, who's doing such wonderful work. I just heard her story, coming here from the Philippines and recognizing she had an opportunity to do something that would use her own skills, but also benefit so many other people. And now this wonderful reality that community members making dresses, making clothing, making bags, making jewelry. And you'll be able to buy it here at the gift shop at the Queens Museum. And that's going to open up a world of possibilities for these businesswomen. That's wonderful. And I spoke with [inaudible] who made this beautiful dress you'll see here on my left, about what it meant to get support to create her vision, to live out her vision. And what that means for her and her family, that's amazing.

And this is what we want to do. This is an example of supporting our immigrant brothers and sisters, of making sure that we are supporting people's livelihoods. It doesn't happen in the middle of a pandemic, unless there's a helping hand for so many people. This is an example of giving opportunity, creating that one door that opens and for these women will keep opening because of their talent and their energy. And this specific idea, this initiative, Hecho Local, to bring out the expertise and talent of the community and bring it to bigger attention is something really wonderful. So, I wanted to see this for myself. I am so happy to see – this is part of how we recover. I've been talking about the recovery, it has to be a recovery for all of us. There are some people and Senator Ramos always appreciates this because we worked together. There's some people that think the only recovery that matters is Midtown, Manhattan – no, no, no, no, no, no, no. We need a recovery for every borough, every neighborhood, a recovery for working

people, for immigrants, for the people who make up this city. The only way that recovery works is if it's a recovery for all of us.

I want to say a few words in Spanish and then introduce a couple of colleagues. But I really want to thank the elected officials who I know every day are fighting for that recovery for all of us. And want equity and fairness in where the resources go. They want to make sure that resources go to Queens. This we know. But they also want to make sure that every community is a part of this recovery. We are going to create something different in New York City. We do not want to go to the status quo before the pandemic. I want to be really clear. We do not just want to recreate what was there before the pandemic, because it wasn't good enough. We want to do something different. So certainly, I have wonderful partners in this, Borough President of Queens Donovan Richards, thank you.

[Applause]

The always strongly opinionated, and I agree with her opinions, State Senator Jessica Ramos.

[Applause]

And City Council Member Francisco Moya.

[Applause]

And again, a special thanks to everyone who's been part of this initiative. I'm going to give a few very special thanks, to Gianina Enriquez.

[Applause]

To Christine Jeanjaquet. And to Pedro Rodriguez. Thank you.

[Applause]

Just a few words in Spanish to summarize –

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish:]

One for each other. That's how we recover. Always helping each other move forward. And I want to give credit where credit is due, our Department of Cultural Affairs, which believes in this kind of really grassroots culture and fostering it in every way, including using this museum to do all sorts of new and creative things. My pleasure to introduce Deputy Commissioner Sheelah Feinberg.

Deputy Commissioner Sheelah Feinberg, Department of Cultural Affairs: Good afternoon everybody. Thank you, Mayor de Blasio. I'm here on behalf of Commissioner Gonzalo Casals who is very sorry he couldn't be here today. I'm going to actually stand here now, it's easier.

Mayor: Take the height.

Deputy Commissioner Feinberg: I'll take the height. Okay. As many of you know, he hails from the borough of Queens and he's a big supporter of the arts. And I know he's very excited to be here – if he could be here, he's very excited. Couple of things, culture, all around us here is what makes New York City great. It connects us to each other. It helps us to process the massive changes happening around us. And it has been a source of healing for many during this pandemic. Throughout the pandemic, cultural groups have been essential to their communities. And from the start back almost a year ago, cultural organizations stepped up to be ambulance sites, COVID testing sites, and food pantries among other things. And now almost a year later, we're serving as vaccination sites, job training locations, and we're lifting spirits up every day with our reopenings and showing us a clear path to recovery for all.

The Queens Museum is a public private partnership that we have through the City. And it's an amazing private nonprofit. And we're here experiencing it today. It's a great example of how culture provides incredible social benefits for all. And it makes communities healthier and happier and helps provide jobs. Which we sometimes forget to mention, it helps provide jobs. And it's a big piece of this puzzle.

[Applause]

Thank you. So, we're proud to support this museum and many other cultural organizations throughout the city and throughout five boroughs. And I want to take just a minute to highlight again one of the things that Cultural Affairs is able to do is have a program called Materials for the Arts, where people can donate used clothing, used wares. And that brand new machine, sewing machine – machine grade – is actually helping to produce all these wonderful products here that are for sale. Both at the table, because I just bought a mask and also in the gift shop itself. So, I want to just give a shout out to the Materials for the Arts program at DCLA. Finally, in closing, I just want to say, if you give New Yorkers the tools, they can build anything. Thank you.

[Applause]

Mayor: That's right. Thank you. And it's so important, thank you so much, Sheelah, that these donations of the material, the sewing machine are what I heard from the women doing this extraordinary work, made it possible. And the part I love is the Department of Cultural Affairs is taking its mission and going much farther to finding ways to help people build at the community level. This is a really expansive vision of what Cultural Affairs means. I think it's the right vision. Equally here at the Queens Museum, an expansive vision of how to make a museum a focal point for a larger community. We in Brooklyn, believe in that too with the Brooklyn Museum. But we love to see it in Queens. I had to do that. I had to do that.

[Laughter]

But the Queens Museum is legendary, really is, legendary for connecting with the community. Not, you know, historically some cultural institutions, unfortunately had a little habit of

excluding and being elitist. This is a people's institution. This is for the whole community, and now that's even growing more. And I want to thank and welcome the President and Executive Director of the Queens Museum, Sally Tallant.

[...]

Thank you so much, Sally. And look, everyone, in the end, it's about seeing and respecting the members of the community. And really understanding the greatness that each person possesses. And we know there are so many times when someone has great talent and a great vision, but they don't get to bring it to life. And they aren't seen. What I love about what's happening here is women who have so much to offer, so much creativity, are ready to do something great, are getting their chance. And it's being shown to the whole city and people are going to be moved. And more people will have an opportunity as a result. So, this is something special. So, let's close today with a round of applause, to all the women entrepreneurs for the beautiful work they have done.

[Applause]

Thank you, everybody.

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