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

**Ebro Darden:** We'll get right to it. We have a Mayor de Blasio, Bill de Blaz, on the program. What's up, de Blaz? How are you doing, baby?

**Mayor Bill de Blasio:** I'm hanging in, Ebro. No matter what, we're hanging in. How about you?

**Darden:** We are blessed in many ways, but you know, still a tough season for all, right, like all the way around, whether it's COVID, which is the big, scary beast outside. And then you got unemployment, you got the lines at the food pantries are long, the lines to get tested are long. And then this morning we wake up to news of former Mayor David Dinkins passing at 93 years old.

**Mayor:** Yeah –

**Peter Rosenberg:** That's where you got your start. Right, Mayor?

**Mayor:** That's right, Rosenberg. And it's – you know, I'm just feeling pain this morning. I know so many people in this city are. And Chirlane and I, we heard late last night and we're still trying to make sense with it because this is just someone who, for us, he was family, he was the person who got us started. I mean I met Chirlane because we both worked for David Dinkins and I wouldn't – you know, I wouldn't have this marriage, this woman I love, this family I love without him. So, it couldn't be more personal, but, you know, also for so many of us, he just showed us what it meant to serve other people and to do it with just tremendous humanity. I mean, this is just – I think people got a little bit of a sense of the human being, but I just want you to know, just the heart that shone through. I mean, he just wanted to help people. He really cared for all the people that he had brought along and his team. He was always looking out for the younger members of his team and, like, encouraging them, helping them along and just absolutely loved children. He was totally devoted to children and he, you know, he did something about it too. He created these wonderful afterschool programs with Beacon programs that continue to this day. In fact, I thought it was my mission to carry on and, you know, build upon what he did. So, we expanded those Beacon programs. We did a lot more afterschool. And things like pre-K were absolutely inspired by his commitment to children too. And so, I miss him right now. I miss him a lot. But I know there's just so many people who were moved by him and made better by him that we're all going to continue on, we're all going to carry on what he started.

**Darden:** So, we had earlier on the radio, we brought – and asked our colleague, we call her Auntie Ann. Her name is Ann Tripp. She's been covering the news on WBLS and on the radio here in New York City for a few decades now. And so, she covered the news of when, you know, David Dinkins was inaugurated as mayor, and now we're talking today. And I wanted to give context to what the first and only Black mayor in a city with a large Black population, like New York City, accomplished, but also point out the racism in New York City that he was confronted with, the way that he had to deal with the police who spewed a lot of racism at him, the city and what ultimately became the Giuliani era after him, and Dinkins didn't even get props for the work that he accomplished as a one-term mayor, because he had so much opposition due to the fact, primarily that he was Black.

**Mayor:** Well, Black and proud to be Black and willing to take chances to create more fairness and justice. Look, you know, Ebro, if he was someone who didn't want to change anything, maybe that response would have been different, but he called out the racism that pervaded the city. And he did it in a very, you know, honorable way. He was someone who really tried to work with everyone, tried to communicate with everyone. Wasn't trying to create conflict but was trying to create change. I think a lot of people saw the gentleman and they didn't necessarily understand the resolve and how much he was about addressing a status quo that just wasn't working. So, he got tremendous opposition. You're right, the police unions were just horrifying the way they treated him, and so many others, but I'll tell you something he kept going. And the thing to remember – you're absolutely right, the reason we are safe today in this city – and we've had tough, tough year and let's put that in clear perspective – but the reason that we went from what were the 80s and the 90s and such pervasive crime and all, David Dinkins achieved the plan to make the city safer. And it wasn't just about improving policing. It was about making sure kids had better options. Young people had those Beacon programs. And he said it is both. You can't just focus on policing. You've got to focus on young people and uplifting young people. He set that whole idea in motion. It changed the city profoundly. But then, to me, he kind of got airbrushed out of history very unfairly because it wouldn't have happened without him. And it's just not right. This is a guy who proved to this city that something could change. And he put us on this path. And I think we have to understand that the things that got better in New York City could not have happened without David Dinkins, just couldn't have. We would have been stuck in a past that was unacceptable.

**Rosenberg:** And that's what I was going to ask you is, what was sort of the most unfair thing about the way Mayor Dinkins has been talked about in the years since he was mayor?

**Mayor:** I think just a profound lack of recognition of how much the city had to address its contradiction and the fact that he did something about it. Because if he hadn't done something about it, the city wasn't going to work. I remember that –

**Rosenberg:** And that contradiction, wasn't just economic contradiction of being a melting pot. It was the race contradiction –

**Mayor:** Correct. If you remember the times leading up to his election, I was on his first election campaign, this city was getting more and more overtly divided. There were acts of violence against people of color so constantly, so painfully – and just overt racist attacks had become way

too common. And he was an answer. He said, we're not going to live this way in this city. We're going to find a way to actually come back together. He would talk about that gorgeous mosaic. And it's so important to understand that phrase. Two words, but they said a lot. Gorgeous because he actually loved people. He believed in people, he believed in New Yorkers. Mosaic, because he said, let each part of our community have its identity, its culture, its truth. You don't need to homogenize it. You can recognize it and can all come together into something more beautiful. That's what he truly believed. And he personified that. So, whereas Koch before him, unfortunately often seemed tone deaf to communities of color and didn't understand the pain and the need for change, and I don't even need to comment on what happened after, if not for David Dinkins, that division, that pain would have festered even more, and the city could not have moved forward. We did move forward.

David Dinkins gave us the opportunity to move forward and there's much, much, much more to do. And every one of us who worked with him is animated by his spirit today. And we need to carry on that mission, but I want you to know had he not been there at that moment in history, this city would not – we would have been stuck in a broken status quo that could not have allowed us to in any way come together and move forward. He actually proved something to change. He just proved it by his very being. And he did it with heart and decency, which is the other thing to remember, that he showed people a path forward. Remember he brought Nelson Mandela to New York City. This is a really important parallel. You brought Nelson Mandela to New York City, which was crucial in establishing Mandela's international presence and legitimacy as the next president of South Africa. He helped very consciously to set the stage for not just the destruction of apartheid, but for Mandela to be seen in advance as a head of state. And it was a very moving time for all of us in the administration. But remember that like Mandela, Dinkins believed we could find a resolution to our problems and find a way to have a multicultural society that worked. And he modeled it just like Mandela did. He modeled it by his very being.

**Darden:** So, if Dinkins was this, the man that you are – is the man that you speak of, and then we have this Giuliani era who tries to take credit for the momentum that Dinkins began, but also in many ways took the city backwards –

**Rosenberg:** Sounds eerily familiar.

**Darden:** And then Bloomberg comes along in a very corporatized, you know, elitist kind of way. Did great things monetarily speaking, I think some people would say, but also created a large economic divide, Bloomberg. I'd have to assume that looking back at history, New York City just went through what America went through, almost at the same time, just, you know, maybe 10 years staggered where you had Obama after Bush, and then you had Trump and now we have Biden. And it's almost, from my brain, it almost lines up too perfectly and poetically because now you have Giuliani, who's basically the spokesperson for Trump. And now we have Biden who we all – we like Biden. We like Biden, but we don't assume that Biden is going to be progressive. We don't see Biden, you know, in the same way that we saw – may have seen other candidates that were running at the time. Talk to us about how you see this Biden-Harris win and in relation to almost to New York City because we're all going through a tough time right now. We're going to have to navigate out of it.

**Mayor:** Well, Ebro, first of all, as usual, I really mean this – a really powerful analysis from you. And I appreciate it. And I think one of the things to emphasize in that analysis is remember the hell that President Obama was put through. You know, the amazing thing was people started to understand and appreciate Obamacare once Trump started attacking it and trying to tear it down. Then suddenly it became popular in polling. But remember Obama was trying to do so many things to move this country forward and he was constantly attacked. And we can't forget that piece either. How unfairly he was treated despite doing so many good things. So, I do have hope for this new administration. I think Joe Biden truly feels something for everyday people for working people, he truly does. And this is important to recognize. There are leaders, as you said, some are kind of elitist by their nature, that's not Joe Biden. He is grounded.

He understands that a whole coalition came together to bring him into office. He doesn't think that, you know, just one part of the community brought him there. He knows he never would have gotten there without Black and Latino votes. He also understands the importance of reaching out and bringing white working class people back into the democratic coalition. He feels that. So, I am actually very hopeful that he is going to do some big and progressive things starting with the stimulus. It's interesting, he's talked about Franklin Delano Roosevelt and that moment in history. I think he's animated by that. That gives me a lot of hope. It gives me a lot of hope, but don't, for a minute, think, because I see your parallel, but that doesn't mean Joe Biden is going to be given an easy time. You know, those attacks are going to begin on him on January 21st and we'll go on the same track again. But I think the important thing, as we reflect on Mayor Dinkins again, is to understand the internal nature of what people do, who are leaders who want to make change, that the change never goes away. What Mayor Dinkins did couldn't be erased, just couldn't be erased. Once he got there and proved that there could be a different kind of leadership, everything changed. And that's why I say he put us on a better path that can't be taken away.

**Rosenberg:** [Inaudible] –

**Darden:** Sorry, Rosenberg, go ahead.

**Rosenberg:** I was just going to say, if you're talking about leadership – and this is a tough question. I tried to bring this up with Governor Cuomo last week a bit. I'm going to bring it up with you. Do you think that at this moment in time, there could be a major statement made by seeing you and Governor Cuomo truly get on the same page? Because it does seem like over time, your guys' constant in-fighting for whoever's fault it is, has not been helpful to where we are as a city and state. Is there a way you guys could truly come together in a way that shows unity and help set a tone for the city and the state?

**Mayor:** Look, Rosenberg, it is a fair question. And I would just say, I – of course, if that's something that's important just to show it, we can do better at that and I'm ready to do it. And I'm sure – I really believe he is too. I keep telling people on so many levels, he and I have actually agreed and that's why New York City and New York State have stayed safer than most of the rest of the country, because we've actually had the same basic vision of addressing the coronavirus head-on and being really data-driven, science driven, cautious, careful. Like that's

been the State approach, that's been the City approach. Where we disagreed, it was not as important as where we agree, but I do hear your point. I'm ready to do that. And I want to be fair. I've talked to the Governor a lot of times. We have conversations that are productive. We know we have a lot of common ground in the approach to COVID. So, if what we got to do is show it more, then that's on both of us to make that come alive.

**Rosenberg:** Ebro, get it done. Let's get them both on the show at the same time.

**Darden:** I mean, that's what we do, baby.

**Mayor:** It'll be the Hot 97 Summit.

**Rosenberg:** Love it.

**Darden:** Yo, are you saying you're in? If we make the call [inaudible] on the schedule –

**Mayor:** I'll be there.

**Darden:** So, we have a commitment from you?

**Mayor:** Oh yeah.

**Darden:** All right. So, consider it done. Griff, put the ask into Cuomo's office. We're going to have de Blasio and Cuomo on for a big kumbaya.

**Rosenberg:** That would be perfect for Thanksgiving too. Beautiful.

**Darden:** I mean, even for whatever, even if everybody needs a break, we'll come back top of December, whenever. We don't want to rush them, we got – you know, these guys. You got to iron their shirts right and, you know, figure out whose background is going to be nicer. You know, the whole competitive – what is the thing? Is it just a New York City versus the rest of New York State balance thing? Like what is the Mayor of New York City and the Governor of New York State thing? Because it is always a thing. It's not just you guys. It's always a thing. And I actually think it's overblown because mayors and governors, they don't all – people don't agree. That's just part of doing business. But I think it's overblown. Tell us what it really is.

**Mayor:** Well, again, Ebro, you know your history. There's no city like New York City and it makes sense that we have things we have to look out for, for our own people here, and every mayor has to do that. And the governor does have to think about the whole state and balance that equation. I really, truly, I've had this conversation with Governor Cuomo. You know, really respectfully. I know he has to think about a lot of different things than what I have to think about, but my job is to defend and protect my people and that can lead to different conclusions. It's not shocking. It's like – I've said to people, it's like, if you think, do you think the federal government always agrees with every state or every city? No. There is a natural difference. What we all have to do is say, okay, that's going to be a part of the reality, how do we best communicate through that? And there's been many times, in times of crisis or even just on

everyday issues where he and I have agreed, and we've been very public about it. But that doesn't get as much attention as when there may be a disagreement, but Ebro, you're totally right. And it's been true of pretty much every governor and mayor. That's not to say, just leave it be. You know, let's keep working on it. Let's keep communicating and let's show people that we do have a lot of common ground. But I also would say, when we have common ground, I would ask everyone who does the analysis and reporting to actually acknowledge that –

**Darden:** Oh, that's boring stuff. That doesn't get click, de Blasio, come on. That doesn't sell [inaudible] –

**Mayor:** [Inaudible] crazy, Ebro. I went crazy. But seriously New York State and New York City, overwhelmingly, have agreed on the most important thing, to be science and data driven, to be cautious and conservative, [inaudible] to be really careful. And a lot of other states, sadly, we're not careful. And we see what's happened to those states. So, I give the Governor credit and the State of New York, and we have absolutely been in a real alliance in terms of, let's stay ahead of this disease, not play from behind.

**Darden:** So [inaudible] limited time with you today –

**Rosenberg:** [Inaudible]

**Darden:** I'm sorry, Rosenberg. Go head.

**Rosenberg:** I'm sure you're going to go in the same direction. The biggest conversation right now is schools, Mayor. There's been a lot of criticism. You came into office with the schools and education being your number one focus and people have been upset about what they see as inconsistency. You started out saying you absolutely wanted to keep the schools open. And now we have the set rule of if there's a three percent rate, you close the schools. And that's where we stand now. So, number one is there validity to the criticism that you have been inconsistent? Do you have any regrets? And what can you say to parents that are freaking out about the [inaudible] right now?

**Mayor:** The most important thing, Rosenberg, is we're going to open our schools again. It's going to take more work. I talked about it in detail yesterday, but we will open our schools again. I feel consistent actually. When a whole lot of people were saying this summer, don't open the schools, it can't be done, it won't be safe. I said, we are going to open and we're going to make it safe, and we did. And for two months we were able to reach hundreds of thousands of kids. But I also said, if we went above three percent, that meant we were having a bigger problem and we were going to close at that point and reset the equation. We did that. We kept to that rule. I know it doesn't feel good. Look, do I feel happy that we got to three percent? No, not at all. I really hoped we could avoid it before this crisis was over. But we're all affected by this second wave, much worse than the rest of the country than here. We will reopen our schools. It's going to be a lot more testing. Parents are going to have to be really involved to help us get done, but we will reopen our schools. And I truly believe every month is going to be better than the previous month, that when we get into December, we're going to start working to reopen our schools. I think January, when we get past the holidays it's going to start to get better. February is going to

start to be better. The vaccine, the impact of the vaccine will be felt more [inaudible] month. But we are bringing back our schools. It's just going to take more precautions, more stringent standards than even we had before, because we have a second wave of bearing down on us.

**Darden:** Now, de Blaz, obviously when you're the leader, everybody likes to point out the mistakes you make, right? You said, everybody's going to have an iPad and everybody's going to be taken care of with technology. We keep hearing reports that everybody doesn't have what they need doing the virtual schools. How are we fixing this? What's really going on with the disbursement of iPads and etcetera, etcetera, and getting kids Wi-Fi? What's what needs to happen here?

**Mayor:** So, Ebro, I think you can have two truths at once. It is true that we still have to reach more kids because iPads have broken in some cases, because more kids are asking for them, you know, or the service isn't working, we have to switch the service. You can keep the same device but switch the service. These are legitimate problems, but that doesn't negate the fact that over 350,000 kids got free iPads, free iPads, free service. One of the biggest things ever been done to close the digital divide. So, I'm never going to say we're done until every single child has what they need, but I don't want to take away from everyone at the Department of Education who moved heaven and earth. You know, that is a third of a million children, 350,000 kids got that service and they got it in the middle of a pandemic. Any child in New York City public schools who either doesn't have a device or it's not working, or they're having a problem with the service, just call 3-1-1. If it's a service problem, we can fix it very quickly. Switch providers, whatever it takes. If you need a new iPad, we have a bunch on order, but so does the rest of the world. So, they're coming in in waves and then we turn them around quickly and get directly to the door of each family. I think that's powerful.

**Darden:** Tablets are hard to come by too, especially when you're buying in bulk. I'll give you that because I work with Apple, so I know. But what is this – and I know parents are, you know, man, they want it to be perfect. And I know on our show, we've reiterated to the audience time and time again, that mistakes are going to be made by the government, by our leaders. This is something we've never been through before. There's going to be problems. We're going to all try to work through this together and be together. How are you dealing with addressing and calming? Because I do believe that, you know, people want to hear our leadership – and we talked to Cuomo about this too.

We're all in this together. Mistakes are going to be made, but the answers can't always be political answers when we're afraid. We need human answers. We need to see you guys say, hey man, we thought it was going to be X, we screwed that up, it's okay. Like everybody's okay here. And yo, we screwed that up. Now pivot because people get confused when there isn't confirmation of a botch of the [inaudible]. Like if you ever noticed people would go, well, you said X and now it's Y and nobody ever says, no, no, no, when we said X, we screwed that up, now it's Y. Does that make sense what I'm saying? And I feel like sometimes you can be a little bit more – I'm asking you to be a little bit more deliberate when the pivot takes place.

**Mayor:** Yeah, Ebro, it's a very good point. And I think one of the things that's interesting, a lot of times journalists will say, do you apologize, do you apologize for that? And one of the things I

say is, I try to apologize when I think I was just plain wrong, as opposed to when something that we did was difficult and people don't necessarily love it, but it was the right thing to do, or we made the best decision we could at the time. You know, when we set that three percent for schools that was based on information we had in August. We did not know for sure what it would be like to run the biggest school system in the country, in the middle of COVID. It turned out we had tremendous, real success. Everyone works so hard to keep schools safe. And then people say, well, okay, so you didn't realize it would be that good and you should have set the bar differently. And part of me says, that's really fair. Some of these [inaudible] make a mistake with that number, and then another part of me looks at this growing reality around us, where the cases just keep going up every day. And I'm like, well, I'm not sure. At times I was kicking myself. I said that three percent, was that too low, should we have been it a different way? And then as I see each day's report of more and more cases I say to myself, well, maybe that wasn't too conservative. So, I want to be honest with you about the difference between I screwed something up versus I'm not sure or things change. But I think you're right, people benefit from just having – even just hearing you like we're doing right now, just talk about it and not necessarily be defenses up or smooth, but sort of maybe a little bit more raw about why things are the way.

I mean, there was a question yesterday morning, totally different topic about specialized high schools, and the question from a journalist, very heartfelt, was that – he said a lot of Asian parents felt offended when I tried to change specialized high school admissions. And I said, I have come to realize that I sent the wrong message to those parents and I apologize for that because a lot of immigrants, hardworking people struggling to get their kid an education, and they thought I was trying to take something away from them. Which is not what I wanted to do. But I also said yesterday, I meant it, I don't want to take it away from them. We have to come up with a solution that's fair for those hardworking families. But we cannot have Stuyvesant High School be three percent Black and Latino combined. That status quo is broken. So, I got to be honest about it. I think I was right in what was motivating me, but I think I was wrong because I left a lot of people feeling hurt that I didn't want to hurt. I didn't mean to hurt, but I didn't understand it. I didn't speak to it properly. I won't make that mistake again. I think you're right. We got to sort of reveal some of what's going on inside us on these issues.

**Darden:** Well, and there's also this, right? Because there's the political answer. And then there's the managerial answer. And then there's the human answer, right? Because you're a manager, you manage your staff, you manage a city, you're managing a business, which is New York City. You're also a politician, right. And then you're also a human being and a father and a husband, right. And so sometimes those answers don't always – the answer doesn't always fit in nice and neatly in those boxes, right. And you know, during this time, I think it's been a realization for all of us because every answer during COVID-19 sucks.

[Laughter]

**Mayor:** [Inaudible] Ebro.

**Darden:** You know what you know what I mean?



**Mayor:** That's a [inaudible] –

**Darden:** Every plan sucks.

**Mayor:** I'm going to put that quote behind me at my press conferences [inaudible]

**Darden:** No, seriously. Sometimes you need to walk up there, and you need to go, listen guys, every plan we have sucks and we're going to pick one that keeps the least amount of people from dying, man. That's the answer.

**Mayor:** You're giving me my new theme.

**Darden:** You know, because honestly there's – sometimes I listen to you, I listen to Cuomo, and it's like, wow, you guys should've just came up to the mic and said, listen, you're not going to like none of these answers today, but this is the information we have and you know, and let's get into it. We always love you for coming on the program. And when you're out of office, when it's time to vote next summer, what do you want people to remember about de Blasio, man?

**Mayor:** Are you throwing me out early? I got all next year.

**Rosenberg:** He's got a long time.

**Mayor:** I got all of 2021.

**Darden:** I mean, listen, I just want to make sure we start – I want to start banging the drum now because I want to make sure you get credit for the good stuff you have because they're going to come for you, man. Like, I've been warning you all these years, man. I keep saying, they come for you. Man, they keep coming for you.

**Mayor:** Well, you're a wise man. Look I don't want to focus on that. I got a lot to do right now, but I do want to say, I just hope that, you know, what we're doing will be remembered for the same humanity that we saw from David Dinkins. You know, what I'm doing, what my team is doing. It is truly – David Dinkins was motivated by love. We have to really understand this. He was motivated by love. He just – he did care for his fellow human being and he wanted to do something to ease people's suffering and help people move forward and ease the division. And he really devoted himself and he took so many swings and arrows, but he really thought he had a role to play in history. And it wasn't going to be fun. By the way, when you said, like, everything sucks. A lot of times, and I saw it up close and personal, a lot of times that job was not easy for him. And it would've been a lot easier for him to just have taken a pass. He ran for mayor because he thought he had a duty. He was someone who really had a sense of purpose.

So, look, I only want to say, I just hope that when my time comes, people see some of that same humanity and that devotion to people because that's what I'm about and that's what my incredible team of people around me is about. They have just not even slept since the beginning of this crisis and they just keep going because they care. And I hope that even when everything sucks, I hope people can feel there's a lot of decent people trying to protect people out there.

**Darden:** Well, Mayor, listen, we know you don't always get the easiest rap from a lot of people. And I understand there are people who feel strongly about it, but we always appreciate your candor with us and speaking on this station to our community that listens, Hot 97, we appreciate it. And please tell the First Lady, we also extend our condolences about Mayor Dinkins.

**Mayor:** Thank you, Rosenberg. I will. And thank you guys because you always – you have the conversation here that the whole city needs to be a part of because it is positive and purposeful. And I really appreciate you guys. Please give my best to Laura as well.

**Darden:** Yeah. Thanks for the baby gift too. That's what she said, she said thanks for the gift.

**Mayor:** Yeah, but you guys do something special for the city. I want to thank you. So, it's Thanksgiving, I say happy Thanksgiving to everyone who follows this show and Happy Thanksgiving to all of you, and I am thankful for you guys. I truly am.

**Rosenberg:** Thank you, Mayor.

**Darden:** Thank you, Mayor. Have a happy Thanksgiving. And everyone else, the Mayor also said that let you guys know don't be an ass, wear a mask and keep it low. He couldn't say it. I said it for him.

**Mayor:** But that was a beautiful sentiment.

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