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**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO DELIVERS REMARKS AT THE BROOKLYN
PUBLIC LIBRARY'S ANNUAL GALA**

Mayor Bill de Blasio: ... government housing in Manhattan and it's just not the same. So, it is a joy to be here. One of the causes I feel closest to my heart is this library system, all it stands for.

And I'm a Brooklynite, I'm a proud Brooklynite, and like so many of you this is not just something we believe in because it's so important to our borough and our city, it's very personal. I remember very vividly all those times that my daughter, Chiara, and my son, Dante, went to the Park Slope branch of the library or the times when they went to the central library and they thought it was like the pantheon when they were young, looking at the grandness of it.

And what the library has meant in our lives, it's magnified to all 2.6 million Brooklynites. And I want to thank everyone here for supporting this work. And I'll speak just for a couple minutes, but when you think about the mission of the library and what it means at this moment in history, your support is more important than ever. It really is.

It's not a phrase. I will give you some evidence of the fact but first I just want to thank folks who have done so much to make the library great. I want to thank Susan for her great work and her kind introduction.

[Applause]

And I want to thank Baratunde for making us feel the importance of the library. Let's thank him.

[Applause]

And Linda for her great leadership all along the way.

[Applause]

And I'll talk about the honorees in just a moment but look very quickly, the notion in a democracy, think about it fundamentally, think about it at its base – the notion of the free flow of information, of a place that anyone can go to regardless of income or status, that all viewpoints are respected, and all people are respected, that is what's achieved every single day in the Brooklyn Public Library system.

It is living, breathing democracy in a moment where democracy is strained, where – as I like to say – we’re going through a national identity crisis trying to decide which path we’ll take.

But in the library, things make sense because there is that sense of openness and freedom of thought. The library is one of the ultimate guarantors that that will survive any particular epoch in history.

So, this is really sacred work. And I want to thank you for your commitment to it because it doesn’t happen unless people are so personally committed. The point you heard earlier about immigrants, I want to focus on that just for a brief moment because for so many generations in this city’s history, the library was a place where people acclimated to their new country, their new city, their new society, their new culture. It’s where they honed their English.

It’s where they learned how to be involved as citizens. And I’m so appreciative for the role the library’s played with IDNYC. And I want to just tell you that it’s such a beautiful story because IDNYC, it means so much to people who feel often times ignored or devalued.

What I heard from so many people who got one and particularly our fellow New Yorkers who are immigrants, is it gave them a sense of belonging, it gave them sense of they were truly a part of the fabric of this place. They counted. They mattered. They were seen.

I will tell you just for anyone who’s ever been involved in an organization or trying to make an organization run, I remember vividly the meeting at the beginning of the process of IDNYC where one of the leaders of the effort very soberly with absolute conviction said, we believe at the high end we might be able to get 100,000 people to get one of these cards.

Well, today it’s about 1,100,000 people who have the IDNYC.

[Applause]

And it’s opened doors to cultural institutions and so much more. So this is an example of what makes New York City great that we believe can elevate everyone. We believe in opening doors to everyone and nowhere is that more true than the Brooklyn Public Library.

Well, you’re honoring people tonight who epitomize those values and who have done extraordinary things. And they are a part of that very special group of people who hail originally from Brooklyn.

Now, I have to be honest, I mentioned my kids. Both my kids were born in Methodist Hospital on 7th Avenue in Park Slope. I hear some Methodist Hospital fans out there.

[Laughter]

Very good, alright.

[Applause]

I remember the first time they started rousing me and taunting me and belittling me because I wasn't born in Brooklyn.

[Laughter]

For better or for worse, I was born in Manhattan. But they made very clear, and they believed there is a [inaudible] superiority associated with being born in Brooklyn.

Well, the next two individuals we bring forward are true – or we claim tonight – are true Brooklynites who have made us very proud. I don't need to summarize any of the works of Dr. Janet Yellen. She is well-known to all and what she has achieved for her nation and the way she helped guide our economy even against such extraordinary headwinds toward fairness and opportunity, it epitomizes the values of Brooklyn.

So I want to say as Mayor of this great city, as a Brooklynite but also on behalf of all New Yorkers, I don't think there's anyone who epitomizes more New York values, Brooklyn values and took that to the national stage and made them affect positively the life of all Americans more than Janet Yellen. Let us thank her.

[Applause]

And the second honoree is known to so many of you. He is my dear friend. He has given 14 years of dedicated service to the board of this organization and that is a beautiful thing. I have to say, my experience from the beginning with Nick Gravante, was he was someone who wanted to do so much for other people despite having an extraordinarily demanding day job. I mean, he does a lot of good right there through his legal work.

His passion for this library has been outstanding. He's been involved in so many other wonderful civic and charitable efforts but I have to speak very personally as well. I went to him years and years ago and talked about wanting to provide leadership.

He never worried about what the conventional wisdom said or what the polls said. He was the kind of friend who was there in thick and thin, and I think a lot of people in this room have experienced that from Nick Gravante.

And that alone marks him as an extraordinary person. But when he ascended to the chairmanship of this organization, he did it, as per usual, with an extraordinary focus and desire to produce, and he did produce indeed.

Attendance records set on his watch, unprecedented growth, expanded hours of operation – all adding up to something very elemental. More and more and more people having their lives enriched by the Brooklyn Public Library. More and more people participate. More and more learning and growing because of that experience, and it was made possible by so many people in this room but we all know it takes leadership. So I want to express my profound thanks for 14 years of service with [inaudible] years as chair and for being a true Brooklynite who loves this place and gives back over and over and over again.

Let's thank Nick Gravante.

[Applause]

So, I'll conclude with again profound appreciation to all of you and a note of hopefulness that what we are doing here in our town is what I think more and more will be seen as the path forward. This city today has the largest number of immigrants we've had in 100 years. We are also –

[Applause]

We also have the strongest social fabric we've had in generations. We have the most jobs ever in the history of the city and we are the safest big city in America.

[Applause]

And so the simple math equation is – our success, our progress is not despite immigrants, it is because we included our immigrant brothers and sisters.

[Applause]

And nowhere is that more true than in the Brooklyn Public Library. Thank you for making it possible.

[Applause]

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