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**RUSH TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO DELIVERS REMARKS AT NATIONAL ACTION
NETWORK DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. DAY POLICY FORUM**

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Thank you so much, everyone. A happy King Day to all.

[Applause]

Rev said that he was a child of the King tradition. And he talks about it constantly – anyone who spends time with Reverend Sharpton knows – he talks constantly about the influence of Dr. King on all of us. We are children, we are grandchildren, of the King generation. What we learned when we first started thinking about our society, and how we had to make it better, how we had to make it more unified, how we had to make it more just – we thought implicitly of the example of Dr. King.

Now, deeds matter in this work. And when it came time to address a broken stop and frisk policy, Reverend Sharpton helped to organize that silent march he referred to. And that silent march down Fifth Avenue, on Fathers' Day a few years ago, changed this city. It changed the thinking, it change the discourse, it changed the trajectory of this city. And it was silent. It borrowed from a rich and powerful tradition – nonviolent, peaceful social change – the essence of what Dr. King was about. And Reverend Sharpton helped to take that tradition, and make it come alive in that march, and that was the gateway to the changes that are being made right now in this city for the better.

So I want to thank him for taking that tradition, that is what we all believe in, what we've all tapped in from – what we all tapped into – we've all been nourished by, over years and years – for taking that tradition, and in that moment, making it come alive. That is the kind of leadership that moves us forward. Let's thank Reverend Sharpton.

[Applause]

Dr. King understood that sometimes the way forward wasn't the obvious way. Down through the centuries, there were voices of anger. There were people who, when they saw injustice, wanted revenge – an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. And over the years, thinkers and people who sought change and leaders looked at that tradition, and they said, wait – it's not moving us forward. It's just creating an endless cycle – a cycle of pain. And what we really need is to break that cycle and move forward together, across our differences. We have to get rid of the sense that any of our differences preclude us from finding each other.

Unknown: That's right.

Mayor: That's what Dr. King epitomized – that understanding, we could do something that maybe wasn't reached often in history, but it was our destiny nonetheless. It is what – in its best moments – this country has epitomized. It is what this city has epitomized – people coming together across every conceivable difference and finding commonality, finding a sense of common destiny – feeling as a family would feel, even despite differences. Families have differences.

Unknown: Yep!

Mayor: Families can bicker. Families can have moments where they say things maybe they shouldn't have said. But families come together, because they feel they're going in the same direction together, ultimately. And that is the kind of society we still work every day to create. There's a reason our foundational documents talk about creating a more perfect union. It was an understanding that it would take time, it would take struggle, it would take work – but it was necessary to never stop that work.

And no one more than Dr. King understood the nature of struggle. He didn't promise us a rose garden. He didn't say it would be easy. He insisted that we be relentless – that all of us be relentless. Dr. King did not say, look at me, I'll take care of this for you. He asked us all to be part of changing society for the better. He asked us all to join in.

[Applause]

Dr. King understood the power of nonviolent social change. He epitomized it. And his example changed this country profoundly. It changed the world profoundly. I don't have any doubt in my mind that Dr. King won that struggle before we lost him, because he changed the way everyone thought. He changed the way we acted. We could never go back to where we were before. That does not mean some of our challenges are not as great, or even greater. Dr. King, if he were here today, would be appalled at income inequality that's growing, not lessening. He would be appalled at the notion that economic justice is still so far out of reach. He would demand that we treat that as the civil rights issue of today. He would demand that we use the same tools he used so effectively.

But he would also say to us – I have no doubt – remember, remember the journey he took to teach people the power of nonviolence – to teach people the power of love over hate.

Unknown: That's right.

Mayor: Dr. King did not tolerate hate speech. Dr. King didn't allow his followers – no matter what was thrown at them, and I daresay that our brothers and sisters in the civil rights movement faced every manner of physical harm and threat – but he insisted they keep their ideas and their voices fixed on hope, and fixed on love. We have to teach today's generation that.

[Applause]

Dr. King said "Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that."

[Applause]

That is the essence of his teaching. We have to teach that message today. I've said many times, there are thousands and thousands of people working for social change in this city. That silent march is a great example a few years ago, and we've seen many since – people engaging in peaceful protest for fundamental change in the democratic way. It works. It is the right way. And then we see a few who spew hate, who try to divide us – who spew hate at the men and women who protect us, which only takes us backwards. And I think it's up to all of us to say to those who purport – who purport to want change – if you're saying something vicious and vile to a police officer, you're not making change. You're not moving us forward.

Unknown: That's right.

Mayor: You're holding us back. Change the policies. Change the practices. Change the laws. But respect the people who protect us.

Unknown: Amen.

Mayor: As we want them to respect each and every New Yorker, in each and every community. Model the behavior you expect. Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. It's as simple as that.

[Applause]

Dr. King – to me, there are so many ways to look at this man – not just an activist, not just a leader, not just a preacher, but a thinker – an analyst of the times we lived in. And to me, Dr. King got to the heart of the matter so often – he got to the false choices. He said revenge is a false choice, saying we've been wronged so we will seek revenge is a false choice. Saying we've been wronged, but we will use the power of nonviolence for change may seem counterintuitive, but it works. Dr. King understood so many of the false choices that pervade our society.

And we, in our time, confronted one in the last few years. At the time of that silent march, when people knew, in neighborhoods all over the city, that the stop and frisk policy was broken – that it was causing hundreds of thousands of young men of color to be treated like criminals when they had done nothing wrong – that it was sending the exact wrong message to those who would inherit our society. And as more and more voices spoke up, and said a change is needed, the false choice immediately was put on the table. If – if you reform that broken policy, if you change, surely disorder will take over, anarchy will take over, crime will take over. Do you remember that?

Audience: Yes.

Mayor: Do you remember how we were told if we wanted a more fair approach, of course it would lead to more crime? Well, we just had the year 2014, and we said at the beginning of the year that that broken policy must end –

Unknown: That's right.

Mayor: Three years ago in this city, 700,000 stops in one year. In the year 2014, there were 47,000 stops.

[Applause]

[Cheers]

Now, we said also that a lot of our young people were being saddled with criminal records for some youthful mistakes. A lot of that revolved around marijuana. We said we've got to stop arresting those who have a small amount of marijuana at – on them, and causing their entire future to be undermined. So we reduced marijuana arrests, in the last few months in this city. They went down over 60 percent in this city.

[Applause]

So think about those voices from a few years ago, and think about what they therefore would have said to us would follow. If stops went down, if the people being stopped were more and more actual criminals now, if the marijuana arrests went down – surely, chaos would ensue. But what happened in 2014? Crime went down almost 5 percent in the city of New York in 2014.

[Applause]

There are over 2,500 fewer robberies in the city of New York in 2014 compared to 2013. There were fewer murders. Fewer pedestrians were killed. More order, more safety, while we created more fairness – that's the way forward. A fairer society is a safer society.

[Applause]

A fairer society opens up doors. A fairer society means police and community can come together. What are we looking for? Mutual respect between police and community.

[Applause]

What does every one of us want? The respect of those who serve us – but we owe them respect too. That balance – that is what we're striving for, that is what we're moving towards. We've shown that reform can bring greater safety with it, and the reform will continue. We're retraining our police force to get closer to the community –

[Applause]

– to work with community members. We're training our police force to deescalate – less violence protects our police and our community alike. We want our police focused – as they have done so well – on drug dealers, on gang members. We want them out there – we need them out there – every day, protecting us.

[Applause]

We have to be there with them as their partners and allies, and growing trust, and growing fairness creates a partnership – an alliance between police and community. It is what Dr. King would have wanted us to evolve toward. Think about it – think about the path he set us on. He would want us to keep moving toward that unity. He believed in things that did not yet exist. I assure you. If we had had the great honor and privilege of sitting in some of those meetings with Dr. King, I assure you there were naysayers all around saying, that just couldn't happen, we can't reach that far, we can't make that big a change. He didn't listen to those naysayers. His audacity is part of what made him great.

Our audacity has to be that we know police and community could come together. It's up to us. It's up to each and every person to show that path. I have faith. And I'll conclude – I'll say that so much, so much of King's legacy is an instruction. He was a teacher. He almost left us a roadmap – a handbook. All he would ask of us is to live up to it – to stay strong, to stay resolute. He never said change happened overnight. But he said it did assuredly happen. Persistence and focus and heart and love will bring us to that better city.

And Dr. King said one thing that I think defined it all so powerfully – one of the so many quotes that you could talk about, but this is the one that always sends a shiver up my spine, and gives me a little more sense that we can make it through – a little more hope, a little more energy. Dr. King said, "The arc of history is long, but it bends toward justice."

Thank you, my brothers and sisters, and God bless you all.

[Applause]

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