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**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO APPEARS LIVE ON INSIDE CITY HALL**

**Errol Louis:** Welcome back to Inside City Hall. The NYPD today sent a letter to the federal Justice Department saying that it would no longer wait for the conclusion of the DOJ's criminal investigation before starting disciplinary proceedings against the officers involved in the fatal chokehold death of Eric Garner on Staten Island. This news comes just a day before the fourth anniversary of Garner's death. I am joined now by Mayor Bill de Blasio to talk about that and more as we do each week. Good evening Mr. Mayor, good to see you.

**Mayor Bill de Blasio:** Good evening.

**Louis:** So the fact that the Justice Department is moving forward is, or saying that the NYPD should move forward –

**Mayor:** The NYPD is moving forward, the Justice Department hasn't been moving forward.

**Louis:** The Justice Department though – in part of sort of urging the NYPD or letting them know they might as well get on with it, they said that they conveyed that information months ago. What's the status?

**Mayor:** That's not my understanding but the bottom line is, let's look at this in the context of four years – I don't know why the Justice Department didn't make the decision, up or down a long time ago. I think when you look at other very prominent cases, the decision making in the Justice Department and the U.S. Attorney's Office whichever one it was, it was much quicker than this. So this has been unusual and I think it has been painful for everyone involved, obviously particularly for the Garner family, to not have resolution. So I think the NYPD is doing exactly the right thing here, saying look, ample opportunity has been given – and the Justice Department was abundantly clear in this case and many others, that they did not want the internal process of the NYPD to go forward when they are in the middle of their investigation – they might bring charges. So NYPD waited but it's gotten to the point where for reasons I don't understand we have never gotten a clear answer from the Justice Department. I think the NYPD is right now to proceed. And they are giving the Justice Department one final chance if they want to act, up or down, they can do that. But this response today, that is certainly news to me. Any way you slice it, it's time to move forward.

**Louis:** Well I mean after four years, the family of course is very upset about this. And Eric Garner's mother, Gwen Carr had a statement – I want you to watch just a little bit of it, saying basically that the City could have acted on its own. Let's take a look.

***Gwen Carr:** Please move forward on this and fire those officers, all of them, not just Pantaleo, we want them all fired. They all was misbehaving on that day.*

**Louis:** The idea being this is about more than one officer, it's, again it's been four years and there was no restriction on moving forward on any of those.

**Mayor:** The history is that the Justice Department to date - I think maybe this case is going to change the thinking about how we handle this – but to date there was always a message from the Justice Department that proceeding with a disciplinary action, which involves a whole public trial, could affect any prosecution undertaken by the federal government. And that was always the theory of the case from the federal government, is don't interfere with our efforts.

Everyone – and all New Yorkers should understand this – when the NYPD undertakes an internal disciplinary process, they look at a range of possibilities, someone could be – an officer can be found guilty or innocent, and if found guilty there is a range of potential penalties, some less prominent but going all the way up to termination.

The Justice Department looks at much more substantial, you know, legal violations and penalties. And they're the federal government, obviously we're a local government, so there's always been a deference to the Justice Department. What is strange in this case is there inability to come to a decision either way.

We now, the NYPD will look at all the different officers involved, determine which are worthy of the disciplinary process, and proceed with that process. And then there'll be a trial, and you know due process, we never prejudge these things. So I certainly understand the pain that Mrs. Carr is feeling and I think for everyone, for the Garner family, for everyone in New York City, our hope is that this will soon be behind us and we can move on and then we will assess going forward, God forbid we have another tragedy, what's the right way to handle.

**Louis:** I guess the issue about it being behind is where some of the advocates are really focusing because there were two sergeants on the scene, not just Sergeant Pantaleo, there were two sergeants, the others returned to full duty. Today we hear from the Justice Department saying, look we told the NYPD they could precede you know months ago, they chose not to do so. And here again we're four years later –

**Mayor:** Again Errol I'm just going to – if the Justice Department wants to produce some documentation to that effect, I'd be happy to look at. I've never heard that they indicated a change of heart because they had previously, very consistently, said over two administrations don't proceed, but if they did in any way, shape, or form communicate, as you said, it was only a few months ago. The bottom line here is, again the internal disciplinary process will proceed now, but it is not the same thing as the other process, I think people need to understand that. And look if the Justice Department has said in the beginning, we don't know when and how and if we're ever going to make a decision, go ahead, of course we would have gone ahead. If the Justice Department said, your investigation will not in any way, shape, or form, affect ours, of

course we would have gone ahead. We got a very different message in the previous presidential administration and we got a different message in the beginning of the current one as well.

**Louis:** Here's one of the concerns, because this involves some of the things we've talked about on other occasions, which is, you look at this case, and you see four years with essentially – as far as anybody can see – no serious effort by anybody to hold those officers accountable. We see in the Saheed Vassell case, we can't even find out the names of the officers involved in that killing in Crown Heights. We see with body cam footage, which was supposed to provide public assurance that things were getting better. We had to sue the administration and nobody gets to see any of the footage, unless the stuff has been edited and released by the NYPD. So, it doesn't look like we're making any progress on transparency.

**Mayor:** I disagree with that fundamentally, respectfully. Body cameras are going to be on all of our patrol officers by the end of this year, that's a huge difference. There's been some very prominent examples already – and body cameras are pretty new in New York City – but instances where there was an officer-involved shooting, and the body camera footage was put out after a few weeks, after everything was resolved in terms of confidentiality issues and issues with District Attorneys in those cases. The footage was put out, and I think it was important for New Yorkers to see it.

In the case of the Vassell tragedy, a lot of footage has been put out. There's some specific reasons – and I think they are fair reasons – why there's been a couple of exceptions in terms of identifying people. But the footage that shows what was happening has been put out. And, going forward, here's what all New Yorkers can know – there is a process. There's due process in every instance. Obviously, in the Vassell case, the Attorney General of the State is investigating that independently of the NYPD, and the NYPD has an investigation going. In the case of –

**Louis:** But in that case – I mean, it's going to be a lengthy process. You have to, sort of, get this outside investigation started, we don't know when that's going to happen.

**Mayor:** Attorney General processes have not been as lengthy, to be fair. The federal government's been a whole different reality.

**Louis:** Look, from the point of view of the public – can't learn the names of the officers, don't know when, or if there's going to be an investigation. First thing the NYPD does is put out their edited footage, right? We ask for the raw footage, we don't get the raw footage. And they release all kinds of negative information about the alleged history of the person who was killed. So, it's kind of a very one-sided release of information, and it's frankly not transparent.

**Mayor:** I disagree, respectfully. A lot has been put out to show what happened in that instance. I think anyone who's frustrated with the aftermath of the death of Eric Garner – I understand that 100 percent, because this has not been the way things are supposed to be because of the reality of the Justice Department. This play-out over four years, and then not even making a decision – I actually think that's unprecedented. Any time in the past where the Justice Department, or a DA, or the State Attorney General – when they complete their activity, the Departmental charges move forward by the NYPD. There's a lot of transparency now with body cameras. You're going to see a lot more, going forward. It's going to become a norm to put out the footage. And I really believe, fundamentally, this has been a process of reform. Look, this is a department that has

deeply, deeply changed. There's training – de-escalation training, implicit bias training is starting now. Last year, I think it was 35 – only 35 instances in which an officer discharged their weapon in an adversarial situation in the entire year of 2017, with a 36,000 person police force. I'm sorry, I really believe a lot of change, a lot of reform is happening. We want to keep doing more, but I think one of the reasons it's so important to put this tragedy behind us is, the role of federal government here – whatever they say about the last few months, undebatable is the last four years. Their inability to come to a decision stretched this out in a way that I think was really unfair to everyone involved.

**Louis:** I've got more to ask about, especially implicit bias training. That was in the newspaper, as you saw. I want to get your thoughts about that in just a minute. Right now though, we'll take a short break and we'll be back with Mayor de Blasio.

[...]

**Louis:** Welcome back to Inside City Hall, I'm once again joined by Mayor Bill de Blasio, and Mr. Mayor, in The New York Times they had an article about implicit bias training. I guess the relevant part of it that I wanted to draw your response on – \$4.5 million contract, they're saying it's one of the biggest contracts to this company for this kind of thing but there are no standards for its curriculum, no track record for assessing whether or not it will have a beneficial effect on the department. It's fine to experiment but, can we acknowledge that that's what this is?

**Mayor:** Well I don't want to accept that characterization with all due respect to the Times – First Deputy Commissioner Ben Tucker has been a real leader on the issue of how we address training in police forces, including his work on the federal level. He's been leading this process. I think there's been a very diligent effort here to figure out training that's going to work in the everyday lives of our officers. Look, I always talk about this – every one of us as a human being has bias, it's just part of reality. Our families, our culture, everything we're brought up with, of course there's going to be biases. And the beauty of implicit bias training is trying to just surface it, identify it. So it helps people to think of their work as public servants, make sure none of that bias creeps in, particularly obviously in a situation as sensitive as the work of police officers. So it's crucial that we do it and it's ultimately going to reach the whole force, which is a tremendous step forward for this city. But there's been a real careful effort to make sure that it's not abstract and academic, that it's something that really will work for officers, help them think, help them use it in everyday life.

**Louis:** What kind of metrics might be used to measure its effectiveness?

**Mayor:** Look I can say, not being an expert in this area and I haven't asked that question yet, but I can say just on a common sense level, this one's harder to measure arguably than if you do firearms training or tactical training, by definition. I think the very process of going through it is healthy. We obviously want to watch how it works in practice. I think NYPD has done a good job of being systematic about evaluating what they do when there's new technology and new training. It's a very modern organization that way. So we obviously have to make sure that it's working and having an effect. But I would say at the outset this is a little more subtle than some of the other things we do in the way of training, unquestionably valuable though.

**Louis:** Let me ask you about the Buffalo Billions convictions in the case last week. We've seen downstate defendants, upstate defendants, all convicted on all counts. Does it trouble you, number one, and number two what do you think would work – what development strategy do you think would work, at least in New York City, that the state could or should be pursuing?

**Mayor:** Look it's very troubling and something's wrong in Albany, and something's been wrong in Albany for quite a while and it hasn't gotten fixed, and it needs to. The City of New York, in the past, we had much more substantial problems in our government. There was some very systematic work done to weed a lot of that out and to put more checks and balances in place. I don't know why Albany has not been as successful in doing it but it's time to toughen up the rules. Look the whole culture in Albany is Wild, Wild West campaign spending rules, where people can do pretty much whatever they want and tons of corporate donations and all that. And the elections rules are broken and actually discourage people from voting. We're really a backwards state when it comes to our political system, and it's got to be tightened up. There's got to be much more stringent anti-corruption measures put into place. But it's horrifying and look, this is what gives government a bad name. When people see these sweetheart deals and friends and donors get literally money back in their pocket in a variety of ways and that's what has to be stopped.

**Louis:** Let me ask you about the dockless bike program. You were on the Rockaways riding a bike the other day. The ones that we've all seen, the Citi Bikes, they have the docks –

**Mayor:** The stations.

**Louis:** The stations, yes. They take up all the parking spaces, we'll leave that for another time. And people use them and they have to bring them back to the dock. Dockless is sort of a brave, new world, where you leave the bike, I guess, anywhere?

**Mayor:** Well you don't leave it just anywhere. There's some stipulations about where's an appropriate place to leave and where's not. But you're absolutely right, you don't have to look for one of those stations, you can dock at any number of places. And look, you've defined the whole issue. Citi Bike has been a vast success, and I said it the other day in the Rockaways, I give credit to Michael Bloomberg and his team for furthering that idea – tens of millions of riders. I hear from my constituents about the parking spaces taken up. That's obviously a real issue but if you say the goal was to get people out of cars and to have a cleaner way of getting around – another alternative to get around – clearly Citi Bike worked. The downside was the stations.

The dockless offers us a chance to give people another option that doesn't involve the stations, that's a little more flexible. You can pick up bikes anywhere, leave them anywhere again with some appropriate rules. We got to find out if that's going to work –

**Louis:** Is this an implicit recognition that some places like the Rockaways are not necessarily going to get Citi Bike anytime soon?

**Mayor:** Well, I think it's a question of what is the right way to go forward. So, first of all because we have had the concerns about the pros and cons of Citi Bike, why not see where this new technology takes us and try it in real life.

And what I'm very proud of, Errol, is we're starting in the Rockaways. We're going to the Bronx, we're going to Staten Island, we're going to Coney Island. This is sort of the reverse of the Citi Bike experience where it was very Manhattan-centric and the wealthier parts of Manhattan first and then went out eventually to the outer boroughs. We're doing it the other way around. I'm very proud of that fact.

But we've got to see how it works. If it works we know for sure it's going to give us more options. It's easier, of course, to implement all over the five boroughs than the Citi Bike model. I think the two can coexist. I think they perform different functions, in a way.

But, look, we know what we have with Citi Bike. We now need to see what dockless bikes really achieve in practice. I can tell you the one I rode was really cool.

[Laughter]

Strongly recommend. People in the Rockaways or people visiting – go check one out.

**Louis:** Okay, let's talk politics, Mr. Mayor. We've – I guess we're at the point where petitions are in, first round of filings are in for some of the fundraising. When are you going to make decisions about who you intend to endorse?

**Mayor:** Well, there's still about two months until the election. It's September 13th, if my memory serves. So, we're just about two months out, so soon. It will be a day before September 13th, I can guarantee you that.

[Laughter]

**Louis:** As you know, having been on the other side of those requests, when the endorsement comes so late they can't tell anybody about it or really make any use of it –

**Mayor:** No, I mean to me – look, I am keeping all my options open. I'm going to evaluate all the different races that are occurring this year in our state. And obviously, if I have something say I want to say it in time to have an impact. But that time will come.

**Louis:** At the national level, there are some mayors whose names keep coming up when folks talk about who might run for president in 2020 – Eric Garcetti in Los Angeles, Mitch Landrieu from New Orleans, former mayors –

**Mayor:** Eric is still in. Mitch is a former mayor.

**Louis:** Mitch is a former mayor. You're going to be a former mayor someday –

**Mayor:** One day because I believe in term limits.

**Louis:** Two questions – one, do you want to be considered in that group and I guess secondly and more importantly what do mayors bring to the discussion of where the nation should be going?

**Mayor:** Look, it's always an honor and flattering when my name is anywhere in that mix but I've said very clearly I'm thrilled to have one of the very best jobs in this entire nation – mayor of the biggest, the greatest city in the country – and I'm going to be doing that until December of 2021.

The future will take care of itself. But I do think there's a reason why mayors are being looked at now because the way things have gone in Washington – look, Washington has been largely paralyzed now for many years. It's unfortunately a bipartisan reality. It doesn't matter if a Democrat or Republican is president. The reality has been that Washington has gotten very little done for the last decade or more.

State government – I think it's true in a lot of parts of the country – also often has been paralyzed. We've seen some horrifying examples around the country. And look, even though some things are happening in Albany, there's a lot of other things that are not being addressed.

The one place you can depend on for constant energy and action is the local level. Look, here we've done pre-K and 3-K. We've done all the reforms in the police department that have made us the safest big city in America but also a better relationship between police and community. We have the biggest affordable housing program in the country. We have, as we talked about before, Citi Bike and dockless bikes and NYC Ferry, IDNYC.

We have so many things going on here that are making people's lives better. And I think that's true in cities around the country. So, in a modern reality where people are thinking differently and really want to see things get done and want to see innovation and want to see action, it actually make sense that they're considering mayors.

And unfortunately the last presidential election also proved to us that anyone can be President of the United States, now, Errol –

[Laughter]

So, I think it's perfectly logical that mayors are being looked at.

**Louis:** Okay, very good. Thanks so much, always good to see you. We will see you next week.

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