



THE CITY OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
NEW YORK, NY 10007

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: April 6, 2018
CONTACT: pressoffice@cityhall.nyc.gov, (212) 788-2958

TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO APPEARS LIVE ON THE BRIAN LEHRER SHOW

Brian Lehrer: It's the Brian Lehrer Show on WNYC. Good morning, everyone. And we'll begin as usual on Fridays with our weekly Ask the Mayor segment. My questions and yours for Mayor Bill de Blasio. Mr. Mayor, welcome back to WNYC.

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Good morning, Brian.

Lehrer: And our phone number is 2-1-2-4-3-3-WNYC if you want to ask the Mayor a question. 2-1-2-4-3-3-9-6-9-2 or you can tweet a question, just use the hashtag #askthemayor.

I want to start with the death of 34-year-old Saheed Vassell by police gunfire in Crown Heights. Would it be accurate to say that so far you've been supportive of the police because the evidence appears to be that Mr. Vassell looked to police and civilians on the scene like he was aiming a gun at them although it turned out to be only a curved piece of pipe?

Mayor: I think it's important to say it this way, there's going to be a full independent investigation by the Attorney General of the state, who I have a lot of faith in. And there obviously will be an NYPD investigation as well. What is fair to say is we have a lot of information that has been put out publically to at least give the public a context of what was happening here and I believe that transparency is crucial.

When you look around the country we've had way too many tragedies but one of the defining differences is whether there is transparency about the information we have. Some cities have done a very fine job of being as transparent as legally possible. Others have not done as well. We're trying to focus on transparency. That's why the 9-1-1 transcripts are out, the video is out. And obviously as we have body cameras ultimately by the end of this year on all of our patrol officers, again when ever legally appropriate, we'll be putting that out in short order. And I think it's important for people to see the whole context, but we can't pass judgement until these full investigations take place.

Lehrer: The Times article on this today says Mr. Vassell was known to the local precinct officers on patrol under community policing but not to those who responded to the 9-1-1 call

about a man waving a gun. And it says the incident may reveal a shortcoming of the community policing program that it often plays no role in the hurried encounters that determine whether someone lives or dies. So what can you say about why it was other officers to respond in this case? And if that's a systemic problem?

Mayor: I think unfortunately that analysis is inaccurate – that you just cited because I asked the question when I reviewed all of the 9-1-1 transcripts and the video. I asked the question of what the time sequence was and it's literally a matter of only a few minutes between the call – the 9-1-1 call and the arrival of the officers. Remember, again, pending a full investigation, but just based on some of what the information that is public domain right now, if you have a situation where someone may in fact be pointing a gun at innocent bystanders and acting menacingly, which the video shows happened repeatedly, you don't wait to call help on the scene. You can see in those transcripts how fearful the people on the streets were for their own safety.

Imagine a situation where, God forbid, someone is out there for whatever reason ready to use a weapon immediately, our officers have to intervene at the first available moment. And obviously if they can defuse the situation that's the training – to deescalate immediately but sometimes things are playing out in a matter of seconds. And we just have to be clear, until we have all the facts we can't pass judgment. But we do know this took place in such a fast time sequence that the normal concepts of reaching the officers who normally are on the beat, etcetera may not have even been conceivable in this kind of – literally a few minutes time span.

I think what's important underneath this, Brian, is neighborhood policing clearly maximizes our chance that any individual who has a challenge could actually get the help they need. And that police would know them if they did come into contact with them in a potentially adversarial situation. It's not a perfect tool because – again not every officer is exactly where you want them to be at that moment if they happen to have that relationship. But what it should help us get to more is getting people the help they need to begin with. This individual, from what we know so far pending a lot more research, had a severe mental health problem that had gone untreated for quite a while.

What I'd like to see going forward is that there's such a bond between police and community and our mental health apparatus, particularly our Thrive initiative, that any family that has a family member with that kind of situation knows where to turn, feels comfortable getting help. That help gets connected to the individual. And we don't end up in a situation where at the very last minute of a horrible trajectory in a potentially violent situation where a police officer has to make a split-second decision, I'd like to see us stop that way, way earlier. But that's going to take a transformation in how we talk about mental health in terms of how we convince people to get mental health support and how we integrate mental health work with police which we're doing more and more. This is much more fundamental and much more about prevention than just trying to sort out these extraordinarily rare and tragic incidences like this one.

Lehrer: Well on that mental health point. Specifically, in the Post today there's an opinion piece by DJ Jaffe and Carolyn Gorman, two people who write about mental health for the conservative Manhattan Institute think tank, and they say that Mr. Vassell as well as Deborah Danner, the mentally ill woman who was killed by police in the Bronx a year-and-a-half ago, could have

been subject to the so-called Kendra's Law in New York State which allow judges to order them into mandated and monitored treatment. It says both had been hospitalized for mental illness twice and had a history of not taking their medication. Could the writers be right about too little use of Kendra's Law here?

Mayor: I think Kendra's Law plays a very valuable role. I think unfortunately for – I'm not going comment on this piece because I haven't seen it. I think too many people treat Kendra's Law as a catch-all or a panacea. It's one of many tools.

I think what is accurate is to say we need to more consistently and more aggressively as a society – this is about City government, this is about our private hospitals, our public hospitals, this is about police, this is about non-profits, everyone, families also – we have to recognize that if someone is in distress looking the other way is the worst of all worlds because it can lead to one form or another tragedy. It could lead to a horrible situation like this, a tragedy like what happened in Crown Heights. It could lead to suicide. It could lead to domestic violence. We can't look away. Unfortunately the societal reality that we've all grown up with is that mental health conditions are ignored until they become so overt and tragic that people have to deal with them.

Kendra's Law in a certain situation is a valuable tool for sure and we have utilized it and we will continue to. But, in other situations what we need more is the frontline which is family and friends and coworkers convincing someone to get help or calling for help for them so we can try and disrupt these horrible patterns.

This is a guy who had a lot of trouble over his life and I feel for him. I feel for Mr. Vassell, I feel for the entire family. This must – long before the tragedy this week this was a family dealing with a very, very painful reality and they clearly couldn't find the help they needed. That's the root cause. That's what we have to get at.

But it's absolutely true and something we are doing but we want to do a lot more. My ideal is that we do such a precise job of identifying anyone who needs that help and we dispatch that help so consistently that a lot of these situations that have become tragically a part of our lives that we disrupt on the early, early side of the trajectory.

Something my wife talks about, Brian, that's exceedingly sobering is in American the typical standard – the national standard tragically is about ten years goes between the manifestation of a mental health challenge and when someone gets consistent treatment. That's when lives are lost, in that ten years when something could have been addressed early and better, and that's the root cause. That's what we have to change.

Lehrer: Last thing on this, the writers from the Manhattan Institute call it your failure to focus City policy enough on the most seriously mentally ill including placement of Kendra's Law evaluators at City hospitals rather than an office in Queens. What's your response?

Mayor: Again, I think that's an ignorant view on their part and that's there politics and ideology blinding them. There was no such effort before this administration to attempt to not only use Kendra's Law but to systematically identify individuals who have a documented mental health

challenge and a documented history of violence and get them specific help and monitoring and ensure that they are accounted for and acted on. That is a day to day reality this administration created several years ago. We've shown consistently the impact that that has had. We've shown how we've used Kendra's Law.

I think this fits, unfortunately, with a right wing message around the country. You see it coming from the Trump administration too. The only thing they want to talk about in terms of mental health is people who should be institutionalized.

Well let's remember something, institutionalization didn't work out so well. We had a tragic history for decades where people were sent away who never should have been, who could have gotten help and could have stayed with their families. It's a very small percentage of people who need institutionalization. The vast majority of people need consistent treatment.

This is something my wife Chirlane has really tried to emphasize in the Thrive initiative. We're not – we're only scratching the surface of the people in New York City and in this country who have serious mental health challenges and need treatment and could get it and continue their lives and be with their families but we're not, as a society, constructing that pathway. Here at least we have a strong beginning, 8-8-8-NYC-WELL. Any New Yorker can call that number 8-8-8-NYC-WELL get a trained counselor 24/7, get connected to help, get appointments so they can get the services they need. That is a strong beginning.

But the folks who need to be institutionalized because of violence, that's a very small swath of maybe a few hundred people in a year. We are trying to identify each and every one of them. I want to see us do more every year to get that done but that's not the fundamental challenge here.

And a lot of people who end up in these tragedies would never have been subject to that kind of treatment under Kendra's Law but they still end up in the tragedy because they didn't get the day to day mental health services they needed.

Lehrer: It's Ask the Mayor here on the Brian Lehrer Show with Mayor Bill de Blasio who joins us for this to answer my questions and yours every Friday from 10:00 am to 10:30 am. Let's go to our first caller since this is the last day of schools being off for Passover-Easter break, we're going to take our first caller from someone who teaches in Queens. Michelle, who lives in Long Beach. Michelle, you're on WNYC. Hello.

Question: Hi, good morning. Thank you for taking my call. Mayor de Blasio, I teach at P.S. 183 Queens in Rockaway Beach, New York a block from Hammel housing projects. And approximately a month-and-a-half ago an operation started in what used to be a vacant lot directly across the street from the school. It's a New York City owned lot which I understand is being rented to this construction company for one dollar. The construction company is in charge of a great project that's going on. They are changing the water pipes and the drainage pipes because of the damage resulting from Sandy. But what they're using this lot for is to process the concrete and the asphalt and for storage of their construction materials –

Lehrer: And is it affecting the school and the kids and the teachers?

Question: The dust – so there’s dust that’s getting all over the cars and I know it’s getting into my classroom even though my windows haven’t been open much. And I understand it’s extremely toxic. There have been people seen in hazmat suits over there and yet the workers aren’t wearing masks which is another issue. The noise level is another issue. And the trucks are going in and out all day long. And these machines are working all day long –

Lehrer: Let me get a response, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor: Michelle what’s – tell me the number of the school again, please, Michelle.

Question: P.S. 183 Queens in Rockaway Beach, New York.

Mayor: Got it. Well, Michelle, I’m really glad you’re calling this in. First of all, thank you for the work you do and this troubles me hearing this. I don’t know the details, obviously but I’m concerned because I don’t want to see anything that might compromise the health of our kids, our teachers. I don’t want anyone who works in the school – I don’t want to see the worker’s health in danger.

So, what I’ll do is I’ll get an inspection out there immediately. I assume that would be either our Department of Environmental Protection or our Department of Buildings would get on that. But I will make sure that happens immediately to find out what’s going on at the site and to make sure it’s safe especially for the kids, obviously. Thank – I really appreciate you calling in. Will you please give your information to WNYC so we can follow up with you directly.

Lehrer: Michelle, hang on, we’ll get that contact information from you off the air and we’ll connect you with the Mayor’s Office. And let’s go on to Pat in Harlem. Pat, you’re on WNYC with the Mayor. Hello.

Question: Hello, good morning, Mayor de Blasio.

Mayor: Good morning, Pat.

Question: I need your help. I’m at my wit’s end. My life’s become a misery. What’s happening is – I understand you live in a brownstone. Well, so do I –

Mayor: No, I actually don’t live in a – I live in a frame house. But go on.

Question: Oh, alright. Okay. Well [inaudible] familiar with them but those are two brothers who were fined and sentenced to three months in prison by a federal court in ‘99. Well, they’ve gotten a hold of the adjoining brownstone next to mine in Harlem. And what their workers have done is they gut-renovating the building and they’ve broken into my fireplace [inaudible] wall. So, I’ve got dust and cold air all winter has been coming from that building into my building. Not only that, I’ve complained to the DOB to some extent and it got shut down for about three months. It’s like I’ve had various problems like there’s other construction sites on my block where there are port-a-potties. Well, their workers were working in the backyard –

Lehrer: Pat, let me get you a response from the Mayor. It seems to be problems with construction sites day on Ask the Mayor but he's got a problem with these neighbors it sounds like.

Mayor: Right, no, and this is a serious problem and we get this type of complaint way too often. So, Pat, again, give your information to WNYC. I'll have the Department of Buildings follow up. The fact that they have been there previously and shut down the site is a very telling fact to me that there may be bigger problems as you indicate that we have to go at, again the root cause of.

Look, I am sick to my stomach over the fact that a lot of contractors, a lot of landlords are so money-hungry that they will disrupt the lives of people around them wantonly and try and evade the law and regulations and health and safety and sometimes again put their own workers at risk.

We are adamant about cracking down with a lot of tools we can use to stop their work, to penalize them substantially. We've tried to increasingly intensify those fines and that's something I want to keep doing to show that there's real financial consequences. There are even situations where people's lives are put in danger, there could be criminal charges. So, I take this stuff very, very seriously and I will make sure Department of Buildings follows up immediately.

Lehrer: Nick in Astoria, you're on WNYC with the Mayor. Hi, Nick.

Question: Hi, thanks so much. I heard some reports this week that Mr. de Blasio, you, might be backing off the proposed BQX trolley from Astoria to Sunset Park, Brooklyn. I live in Astoria so I am extra curious about what is going to happen with this project. I have two questions – one, are you in fact backing off of this project and two, if you are would you consider using the \$2.5 billion purposed to build the BQX and put it towards some NYCHA funding?

Mayor: So Nick, no I am, this is an instance where a real disservice has been done by the media, specifically the Daily News in taking comments that presented no change in our position whatsoever and trying to reflect something entirely different. I don't understand how a journalist does that, I don't understand how a journalist goes out of their way to misrepresent the facts and I have seen it way too often lately at the Daily News.

We are – my deputy mayor spoke about the complexities of a major undertaking like this but it's one we believe is going to be very, very valuable for what is one of the single biggest growth areas and population centers of the entire City of New York. The East River waterfront in Brooklyn and Queens, this is increasingly you know, the core of New York City and we think the BQX is going to be a high impact investment in the community.

The, and also because I think it is going to be part of positive development of housing, affordable housing, job creation – that's part of why it interacts very positively with what we are trying to do overall to help those communities strengthen. It's going to serve 40,000 public housing residents in many communities that are underserved by mass transit.

But it is a big complicated endeavor and it's certainly going to require some federal support as well which is something I am very hopeful about, particularly because of the presence of Senator Schumer in the Senate and the role he plays. We are moving forward but we have to get the exact details right. And we are going to have plan out going forward.

I think to your other question – look what we believe is that we have to do a lot of things simultaneously. This is a city – you've probably heard Nick we now are officially at 8.6 million people, the highest population in our history. We will be at nine million people – the projection now is as early as 2030 which is astounding. We must have more mass transit and it's not going to be created by the MTA on the scale we need so that's why we have NYC Ferry, that's why we believe in light rail for example. That is crucial to the future of our economy for people to have economic opportunity, for people to be able to live their lives.

Meanwhile we have a huge mission to do much more to help public housing – talked yesterday about huge investment we've made – \$2.1 billion already in capital funding, \$1.6 billion in expense funding to help improve public housing. We are going to have to do a lot more but we are going to need there also State help and federal help which has not been forth coming in the past, hopefully now that situation is starting to change. So I think Nick, the honest answer is we got to do both of these things, we've got to keep building out more mass transit and we've got to keep investing public housing.

Lehrer: On public housing as you know the Governor official declared a state of emergency this week, the real estate site 6SQFT says Cuomo's executive order requires an independent monitor be chosen within 60 days by Mayor de Blasio, City Council Speaker Corey Johnson, and representatives chosen by NYCHA residents. The monitor would then have 30 days to select a contractor for repairs without input from NYCHA. Once the contractor is selected the State will release the \$550 million that's \$250 million in emergency state resources and a previous \$300 million commitment for repairs to the monitor who will have authority over the funds. So what do you think about program and what will you be looking for in a monitor since you get to participate in choosing that person?

Mayor: Yes, Brian I spoke to this at length yesterday, I'll just summarize. First of all we are still evaluating what is a complex and unprecedented executive order, one that raises some very serious concerns. And there are some things in there I think we have to address with the State because they are so usual and I think unlike anything we have seen before and they don't actually speak to the core of what we think is the problem here which is one, what we need is design-build authority straight up to help us – which is the way of expediting projects and saving time and money. That should have been presented to us a long time ago, that should have been done in this budget across the board for all NYCHA activity.

Yesterday I talked about 67 roofs of buildings that have been having problems with leaking and mold and all, where we redid the roofs of 67 buildings in the last year including all the roofs at Queensbridge Houses who needed it. That's the biggest public housing development in North America. We were actually literally on top of the roof to show the public and the media what it means to get these things fixed. It has nothing to do with the Governor, the executive order, the

State, this is what NYCHA does every day and the City supports every day to fix the physical plant.

If we had design-build authority we could have done that a lot quicker. We need that across the board, we needed that state money when it was first allocated in 2015 and 2017 and it has been withheld ever since. By the way Brian, we don't know if a monitor speeds things up or slows things down

Lehrer: Why not?

Mayor: Because we haven't experienced it but we do know the State has been sitting on top of a huge amount of money that they never gave NYCHA. So you'll forgive me that there is a lot we have to piece a part and there are a lot of unanswered questions here.

Lehrer: Another call from a teacher on the last day of spring break. John in Montclair who teaches in Manhattan, John you are on WNYC with the Mayor.

Question: Hi, good morning Brian, good morning Mr. Mayor. Thank you for taking my call. Mr. Mayor it has been more than two years since you said as you announced the institution of pay parental leave policy for non-union city employees. You said paid parental leave means healthier and more financially stable families, more effective workplaces and a stronger and more just city which everyone can get behind, yet you still haven't gotten behind a plan to extend paid parental leave to a vast majority of city workers including teachers.

I work at a public high school in Manhattan and have seen firsthand the negative impacts of the City's current misguided policy – incidents of adopted children who miss out on the chance to bond with their families, new parents who come to school worn out and stressed out, mothers of older children who come to school sick, sometimes spreading the sickness because they have used all of their [inaudible] to recover from giving birth. When can we expect you to get, to advocate and get behind as you said you would – a policy that creates paid parental leave for all city workers?

Mayor: John, first of all thank you for the work you do and second the offer is on the table to all unions in the city to come to a specific plan – each union has to do it through negotiations, that's been true from day one, and every union understands that. I am very hopeful that quite soon we will resolve these issues with a number of unions so I don't have a specific date for you but I am very hopeful it is something we are going to get done this year but it's not a matter of me just doing a decree, it has to be done through collective bargaining and it has to be a part of a bigger discussion. Again I am very hopeful I think it is going to be great and I think it is going to get done very soon.

Lehrer: I want to ask you about the growing conflict between you and your Department of Investigations Commissioner Mark Peters. He fired I gather a special commissioner for investigation of the schools and now reportedly you are thinking about firing him. City Councilman Ritchie Torres, head of the Council's Oversight Committee was quoted saying if President Trump did to Robert Mueller what Mayor de Blasio did to Mark Peters then it would

be called a public scandal. What's your response on the sanctity of the independence of the Investigations Commission?

Mayor: Again, I don't even understand what the Council member said there. What we did was look at a situation where an independent special commissioner for education – it's a very important role, a role that had been respected highly for decades, people like Condon and Stancik and others who have held that role where very substantial figures who were respected for the independence of their work.

And we saw something we haven't seen since that office was created – the Commissioner tried to interfere in the operations of the office, it's all quite documented, so much so that he then fired the very person he had chosen for asserting her independence and then she filed a whistle blower claim. This is not like anything we have seen before. I have the authority as Mayor, under the executive order that established that role to put in the safe guards needed to protect that role and I did. I said simply that you know, it's not going to possible going forward for a DOI Commissioner to remove someone without my consent and it's not going to possible for them to choose someone without my consent because we have to protect the importance of that special commissioner office, makes I think total since given what is sadly an unprecedented situation. On all of the matters related to that commissioner and any other commissioner, it's a personnel matter.

If at any point I have something to say on it, I will. But you know, I find it very, very diminishing and strange that people are trying to make comparisons to something entirely different happening in Washington, D.C. They're apples and oranges.

Lehrer: I gather Councilman Torres would not agree to put that commissioner and other commissioners in the same basket, and he reportedly will seek an amendment to the City Charter prohibiting any mayor from firing an investigations commissioner, in particular, without the approval of City Council. Would you support such an amendment?

Mayor: No, the City Charter is quite clear and I think the City Charter makes a lot of sense. I name a variety of commissioners. I hold them accountable. It's quite clear – you know I was asked this question at a press conference with Commissioner O'Neill the other day and I said, look the Police Commissioner is someone who I choose. The Schools Chancellor is someone I choose. The Corporation Counsel, who is the steward of the legal standing of New York City for today and for the future, is someone I choose.

And if I ever feel they're not doing their job it's my responsibility to the people to make a move. But what typically happens is if someone's doing their job they have a tremendous amount of independence and that is respected. That's certainly what I've done in my administration and what I'll continue to do.

If someone at any point is not doing their job, it's actually my role as mayor, it's my responsibility to the people to act on it. So, I think, you know again, let's not make comparisons to other situations that are not applicable and not comparable.

Our City Charter is very, very clear. And I think it's right the way it's right now.

Lehrer: Enrique in Harlem. You're on WNYC with the Mayor. Hello, Enrique.

Question: Yes, hello, Mr. Mayor. I love your work. And hello, Mr. Brian Lehrer, you have a fantastic show that I've been following for many years.

Lehrer: Thank you, sir.

Question: I'm calling in regards to an issue which I don't know how to deal with. My profession – I am an interpreter and I work in the New York City courts – Bronx Family Court, Brooklyn Family Court, different kind of courts, criminal, landlord-tenant – and I have an issue and I'm sorry that it's a personal issue and I know that people here are calling for [inaudible] –

Mayor: [Inaudible] tell us what it is.

Question: I'm going to try to get to the point as soon as possible. [Inaudible] seeing the situation in terms of the crisis that there is for affordable housing. I live in a building which is rent-controlled and one of our neighbors turns out to be that they've converted their apartment into a bed and breakfast and we have people walking in and out, people who we don't know who they are. They could be French, Italian, American, and –

Lehrer: And is it just that you don't like them doing that? Using their apartment as an AirBnB or something like an AirBnB because it brings strangers into the building? Enrique, is that your issue?

Question: Yeah, we're concerned. We don't know who these people are. And the lease doesn't allow – our lease specifically says no sublets –

Lehrer: Okay, let me get your response.

Mayor: This is a situation we're seeing too much of around the city and we have an Office of Special Enforcement in the Mayor's Office that has been given a lot of resources to crack down on this kind of thing and they're doing a tremendous job.

Lehrer: What's the policy?

Mayor: Well, the policy – I'm not going to give you chapter and verse because I can't pretend to be a perfect expert. I can say a couple things. One – there are really clear standards about when you can and cannot rent out to people according to your own building's structure and lease, that those have to be honored to begin with. But then there's also the question of if someone is in an affordable housing context, there's clear stipulations. If you have affordable housing support of what you're allowed and not allowed to do in terms of making money off of something that is in some way regulated or subsidized. There are health and safety issues.

Look, each situation is different but my point to Enrique and anyone else listening to this situation is if you think some illegality is happening, if you think something is being done by a neighbor that's creating a safety problem, our office of special enforcement needs to hear that report so they can see if there's anything that they can act on and people can literally call 3-1-1 and report such a problem.

So, Enrique, why don't you give your information to WNYC and we will have one of our inspectors follow up with you. But unfortunately, look, there are too many people out there trying to make a buck and doing it in a way that literally violates their own lease or their own building rules or the law and in some cases can create danger for their neighbors.

This is something – we've even found landlords who had tried to convert entire buildings into a de facto illegal hotels. And we've cracked down on them and we have now real serious penalties we can bring to bear to anyone who does that.

So, we'll take Enrique's report now but I want to encourage anyone else who feels this happening in their building to please call 3-1-1 so we can to work on it.

Lehrer: Alright, we're almost out of time. Before you go, I want to give you a chance to respond to something President Trump said yesterday in an apparent rant that was full of falsehoods that he apparently just made up several of which we'll take about later in the show with another guest but one of which referred to New York City.

He was trying to argue that immigrants are dangerous and tie that to family-unification immigration and the diversity visa lottery program to let people from countries that don't send up a lot of immigrants to send some. He said this about the terrorist Sayfullo Saipov who drove a truck onto the bike path in Lower Manhattan on Halloween last year killing eight people and who was here on a diversity visa from Uzbekistan.

President Donald Trump: And came in through chain migration or he might have also come in through a lottery but he brought a lot of people with him. They say 22 people – 22 people. So this guy because he's here now can get the mother and the father and the grandmother and the cousins and the brothers and the sisters and the aunts and the uncles –

Lehrer: Now, the times fact-checked that today and said Saipov only has his wife and three kids here with him which is all the law actually allows for a green card holder. He cannot bring in extended family and there's no evidence that he brought in anyone else. So, that 20 to 22 people seem to be entirely made up. What would you add about the threat to our city from current immigration policies and the way the President is framing it?

Mayor: It's so troubling, Brian. I'll try and break it down quickly. First of all he should answer the question of how Melania's parents got here which is exactly the same route through family reunification. Second when you listen to him, it's so eerie because it just brings you back to Joe McCarthy and Joe McCarthy's right-hand guy Roy Cohn who was the mentor of Donald Trump. And it's just a sick commentary that the same hateful device and rhetoric that framed

McCarthyism in the 1950s is still being used by a president of the United States today just in a different form.

He is absolutely wrong about every element of this. The facts are wrong about this case. The facts are wrong in terms of what immigrants do. In fact immigrants contribute intensely to this country. This is the safest big city in America right now and also has more immigrants than it's had in a hundred years.

I think the American people are going to be able to see through all of this because basically what he's denigrating is the notion of family as a meaningful force in our society. I use my own example. My grandparents came here from small, poor towns in Southern Italy, no serious education, didn't speak English. They came here because family members were here already and they lived the American dream. And I'm the second generation born in this country and I have the honor of being mayor of this city.

I mean we've got to stop this madness. This is just a frontal attack on immigration, it's nativist, it's backwards, it's going to hurt us, and it's bluntly a classic, classic situation that the wealthy use – and who's more of an example of the wealthy than Donald Trump – to distract every day working people from the challenges that face them by trying to create division according to race and nationality. Oldest trick in the book.

I think the American people will see through it.

Lehrer: Mr. Mayor, thank you as always. Talk to you next week.

Mayor: Thank you, Brian.

###