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**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO, FIRST LADY MCCRAY DELIVER REMARKS
AT DESTINATION TOMORROW'S PRIDE HERITAGE EVENT**

First Lady Chirlane McCray: Hi. Yes, good afternoon. It's great to be here in person. I got to touch the flesh a little bit when I walked in here. I want to thank you Sean, and Sage, for having us and for everything that you do. This really is a wonderful day. As I look around at all, you, I feel hope. I feel possibilities. I feel dreams crackling in the air. You know, last night I watched an episode – one of the last episodes – I know I'm behind, no spoilers, please – I watched the one of the last episodes of Pose. And during the show, I saw an about a trans woman who was interviewing for a job. And I watched two men kissing over a bottle of Boy Butter. And I was just – I mean, my mouth fell open. It's a new world. It's a new world. I know we've got farther to go, but it's a new world. When I moved to New York City a year after college, I could not have imagined any of this. It was 1977, I was a poet, I identified as a lesbian. But most people couldn't be out at all in those days. Not with their identity at work – I mean, if you were out, you didn't have a job or you lost that job. I was only out with my friends at clubs like Bonnie and Clyde's. Anybody remember Bonnie and Clyde's? No? Okay, I'm kind of old. Weekly organization meetings like Salsa Soul Sisters in a room that was loaned by a church in The Village, because there's no other place to go. And like so many other young people, I came to New York looking for work, looking for love, looking for community. And it really wasn't easy. I struggled, I struggled a lot, but others struggled much more than I did.

Early on, I met a beautiful long-legged young dancer in her 20's, her name was Ariel, who leapt to her death from a window. I became friends with a talented writer who struggled with an eating disorder for decades and recently passed away. And in the group that I spent a lot of time with regularly, more than one or two people struggled with alcoholism and had violence in their relationships. And it breaks my heart that so many of the young folks that I met, the young folks that I knew that who are my family in my 20's are gone now. There should have been less hardship and more happy endings.

And so, when I became First Lady, I knew I wanted to prioritize support for LGBTQ young people, because I know how much they from having mentors and a safety net. So, we founded the Unity Project a few years ago. It's the first program of its kind ever in New York City to support LGBTQ youth. And the results have been very satisfying, many wonderful stories, providing housing and job training, making sure young people have access to health care, including mental health care, connecting them to peer support. And just a few weeks ago, we launched Unity Works, which is – which is history-making. The largest workforce development program ever created for LGBTQ communities – you can applaud if you like.

[Applause]

We've got to, you know, find the joy, right? Definitely have got to appreciate the joys that we have. We've come a long way, but we still have a lot farther to go. And I want everyone here to know that that these are still – these are trying times. We've got our work cut out for us, but there is always help and there's always hope – always. If you are – if you know someone who's struggling or if you're struggling, I want everyone to know that we've got a phone number. We've got a NYC Well. You can call and speak to a trained mental health professional any time of night or day confidentially for free. It's 1-888-NYC-WELL – can you say that with me?

Audience: 1-888-NYC-WELL –

First Lady McCray: One more time –

Audience: 1-888-NYC-WELL –

First Lady McCray: Thank you. I want you to remember that number and pass it on to people because you never know when someone – they just need someone to talk to, right? Because they don't have someone that they can trust or someone who might have answers for them. Now, this number, they have counselors who can connect you to a queer therapist. They know all the resources in the city. Back in my day, there's – we didn't even have the Gay Community Center, or whatever they're calling it now. There was nothing. Now, we have a lot. A lot of people don't know how to connect to these services, to the resources. You call that number and they can make that connection for you. It is not possible for everybody to know everything. And we have LGBTQ community centers in all five boroughs, like this one. Some are still offering virtual services, but some are beginning to open up so you can be there in-person. So, there's always some place to go and get these resources. Some places like this where people can find health care, housing, a job, or someone to talk to. Again, there's always help and there's always hope. And there's so many more places to socialize, and to connect to other people that are healthy, and that's [inaudible] want it. So, please take advantage of it.

Now, I have the pleasure of introducing someone who has fought for equality and dignity across our city for a long, long time. I met him when he was fighting for domestic partnership to be legal. And, as Mayor, he has made sure that no matter who you love, how you identify, New York City is your home. So, please welcome my partner, our mayor, Bill de Blasio.

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Chirlane and I worked together for domestic partnership – we liked that idea so much, we tried it out ourselves.

[Laughter]

You never know what will happen when you start working with someone. So, everybody, it is a joy to be with you. This is an amazing moment in history that we are experiencing together. We went through hell last year, all of us, and this community in particular here in the Bronx had such profound challenges. And we all understood, we were dealing with something unlike anything we could possibly imagine. And people say to me a lot – well, how do you feel? How are you doing? You guys went through so much, how are you? And I said, you know what? The fact that

it's 2021, and it's getting better every day, and it's the Summer of New York City, and we are making our comeback – that's how I feel. We are coming back. It's a good feeling, isn't it? And thank you, everybody who's here, because you're part of that comeback in New York City. You're part of what makes New York City great. You do so much for the community. I want to thank everyone. And I want to say officially, Happy Pride.

[Applause]

So, who we are? Who are we as New Yorkers? We are the city with the largest LGBT community on earth and we are proud of it. And we're working every day for a more inclusive city.

[Applause]

And I am so thrilled that we're having this gathering at Destination Tomorrow, because this is an example to me of people coming together to do something that was needed in this city, that was not easy to create, but was necessary, working, struggling, and ultimately victorious. And we wanted to be here – a lot of great places to celebrate Pride in New York City, but this was the place to send a message – this needs to be about the community. This needs to be about the people.

[Applause]

I want to thank everyone who has joined us here. This is a very special time, because we have new leaders coming up. All of us who have been leaders before, it was an amazing, amazing experience. Chirlane and I have six more months in this role. We're also here with a great leader who we went on this journey with, former Speaker of the New York City Council Melissa Mark-Viverito, thank you. A lot of the spicier things we achieved in this administration was with partnership with you, so thank you. We knew no limits, so good things happen. But now a whole new generation of leadership coming up, one of whom was elected before this election, just a short while ago. New Council Member, Oswald Feliz, thank you. Please, thank Oswald and congratulate him. Two incoming members of the City Council who just got elected, more women than ever before –

[Applause]

Took a few decades, but we got there. Council Member Marjorie Velazquez –

[Applause]

Let me be one of the first to say it to you. Incoming Council Member, got a little ahead of myself – incoming Council Member Althea Stevens, congratulations.

[Applause]

So, everyone, the beautiful thing about New York City is we do not get lost in our history. We honor our history. We learn from it. Then, we always create something new. So, a half-century ago, Stonewall Rebellion started so much, so much that was necessary, but we don't sit around and say, oh, let's, let's look back and just admire from afar and call that enough. We take inspiration and would really honor the folks who stood up when it was really, really tough. And then, we keep going. We kept coming up with more and more. Just in these last years, creating an LGBTQ Health Care Bill of Rights, something the community needed and deserved. We've done that in this city. The Equal Access Bathroom Law, crucial in this city. The law – and I was so honored to sign it, creating a third gender category on New York City birth certificates. All of these are ways of saying everyone belongs, everyone matters. So, if we're going to keep doing this work of inclusion and respect, it has to be at the grassroots.

Chirlane and I've had this conversation many, many times, that not just in this movement for liberation, but in many others, we saw plenty of racism, plenty of sexism, plenty of classism, even in movements that were trying to do something positive on the one hand, they were reflecting society's inequalities and insufficiencies on the other hand. What I love about this moment in history is it's all on the table now. We – I'm not we're at all perfect in the way we're talking about things, we've still got work to do, but, more than at any point I've ever seen, there is a more honest conversation, a more inclusive conversation, a recognition that you can't just be noble and correct some of the time and leave out a whole bunch of other people in the process. You actually have to think about bringing everyone in. That has taken a lot of work and a lot of people in this room contributed to that work, but that makes me hopeful. It makes me hopeful when the whole conversation is better than a whole lot of other things can change.

So, being here again makes me energized. This center, once upon a time, would have been considered an impossibility. And then, it became a reality. And now, so many people are helped and supported and encouraged and they will go out and reach others. It just keeps growing and getting better. So, as part of this celebration. I want to honor destination tomorrow. And I want to particularly honor someone who saw the need and did something about it. A lot of times, we see the need, but not everyone is quite as courageous and energetic as this individual in doing something about it. He created this space and made sure it was by and for the LGBTQ community and some place where people could get support, whether it was health care, or jobs, support, whatever it was, a place you could go and know it was about you. That's an amazing thing.

So, I want to call up someone who really, we all – we all need to honor today. A native of the Bronx, Sean Coleman, come on up.

[Applause]

Sean's fashion ensemble today –

[Laughter]

Did you polish those sneakers? Went to the store for sneaker polish. And now, in the spirit of collectivity – and Sean is worthy of being honored himself, but we're going to honor the whole

organization, because it is about everyone. So, I have a proclamation I'd like you to hold up here, Sean. First, I'm going to – wait, let me do this first. I should know this by now. First, we smile brightly. Hold on – one second before I call you up, because I want to – that's perfectly good. Yeah. Make it, bring it out, bring it all out. Okay. Work it. Work it. Okay. This proclamation is about why Destination Tomorrow is so important, was so historic, so crucial. But I'm not going to reiterate all that, you know, but I'm going to read the last sentence, because I love this sentence, because it gets to the best part. Because I proclaim, officially, as Mayor of New York City, Tuesday, June 29th, 2021, in the City of New York as Destination Tomorrow Day.

[Applause]

[...]

Mayor: Sean – powerful. Wasn't that powerful? Wasn't that beautiful? I think you need to applaud him some more.

[Applause]

Everyone, I want to emphasize something that Sean said about health care – the disparities. What we saw in COVID, we knew it in many ways, but it came out evermore, painfully and sharply, and the world saw it. Now, we've got to be conscientious about getting health care to everyone who needs it. And one thing we have in New York City that I don't know why it doesn't get more attention, and it needs to, and it should, and I'm going to ask everyone to be an ambassador here. We guarantee health care in New York City in this way. If someone cannot qualify for health insurance on the exchange, we have a health insurance program here in New York City we call NYC Care. It does not matter whether you are documented or not. It does not matter whether you have a little bit of money or even no money. If you need insurance, we will get you insurance. If you're not qualified for insurance, we give you a health care card. You get a primary care doctor. You got all the special services through our Health + Hospitals hospitals and clinics. It is free health care for anyone who cannot afford to pay. And, again, regardless of documentation status. If anybody you know cannot afford a health plan, all they have to do is call 3-1-1. This is the only city in the country that guarantees health care. So, please spread that word so, so many others can get what they need. Help us spread that word.

Now, everyone, I want to talk about a documentary I saw a long time ago and I was deeply moved by. And, for so many of us, we go on our journey of understanding and we have those moments where, you know, some light shines, and some understanding, some appreciation, some solidarity, some sensitivity. When I saw Paris is Burning, it was like a thunderbolt.

[Applause]

An extraordinary work of art that opened my eyes to a heroic reality of folks creating something, no matter how much the world around them tried to put them down, or reject people, creating something beautiful and new. And that time in history is being celebrated anew, and I'll talk about that in a moment, but I want to just go back to the original moment. And, thank God, for that documentary that gives us a feeling of being there and what it meant. The folks who created

that moment and that movement, who the ballroom scene, and all the joy, and the solidarity, and the support that went with it. They were heroes. They were creators. They were change-agents. And so much that we've all done since got elevated by that movement. And yes, it was about joy and it was about artistry, but it was a movement too, from my perspective, because it changed minds and elevated people and gave people strength. And we are so honored that someone who was a pivotal figure in that time and who now continues to be here to build and support the work of Destination Tomorrow is here with us. A legendary ballroom emcee and a change-agent to this day. I'm going to provide, on behalf of the people in New York City, a certificate of recognition to someone I can only call a true New York City legend. Please come up, Junior LaBeija.

[Applause]

[...]

Mayor: Thank you so much, Junior. That was beautiful and powerful. And thank you for all you have done for this city. Give Junior another round of applause.

[Applause]

Now, we've got a wonderful performance that's going to help pull this all together and close this out. But I just have to say, as a fan – did Dominique actually come into the room back there? Can we tempt Dominique to come up here for a moment? Would you come up here and join us?

[Applause]

Dominique, you slay me.

[Laughter]

Come, please. Your Mayor must see you.

[Laughter]

I wonder – I have to say something about you with great honor and respect. And I wonder if you will then share any thoughts you have. So, I just wait during Pose for that dialogue moment where Dominique will get to do her thing, and I just wait for it, wait for it. And there are many – I've been watching the most recent episodes. I think your explanation of your fine working relationship with the mafia is one of my personal favorite moments. But the part that I have to say, and I could name many – seriously, like, I am like your dialogue fan boy here – for everything you do, because you did it just beautifully, flawlessly. But when you start the House of Wintour, and then there's that pause, and you say Wintour is coming –

[Laughter]

Which is like across-the-generations timeline, word play – it was brilliant. Everything you have done in that show is brilliant. We are so proud of you.

[Applause]

Would you grace us with a few words?

[...]

Mayor: I'm just going to be floating on air for a while here. I met Dominique. You are regal. You really are regal and a blessing. So, thank you. Thank you. Everybody, let's now celebrate a wonderful moment together and let's bring forward the youth of Destination Tomorrow and the Sobro Pride Dance Troupe.

[...]

Mayor: Beautiful performances. And everybody, all I can say is – and I don't mean to be a little cheesy here, but I feel a little better about tomorrow because of Destination Tomorrow.

[Applause]

You can quote me. Happy Pride, everybody.

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