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**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO, FIRST LADY MCCRAY, CHANCELLOR
PORTER RENAME P.S. 368 THE WILLIAM "BILL" LYNCH SCHOOL**

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Alright, it's happening. Everyone, I'm really, really appreciative, so many good people, so many good friends, so many people who knew and loved Bill Lynch are here today for this very special moment. And to open up our proceedings and offer an invocation, Reverend Al Sharpton –

[Applause]

[...]

Thank you so much, Rev. And now we have the joy of hearing from the principal of this school. This school community has welcomed the addition of Bill Lynch's name. And I do want to note, so people aren't confused, the Adam Clayton Powell School is another part of this complex. But Bill Lynch's name will now be felt all over the community, be part of history, be part of something we all honor for time immemorial, and it's because this school community embraced it. My pleasure to introduce Principal Reilly.

[...]

There's something very Bill Lynch about the fact that there was a thorough grassroots democratic process that led to the naming of this school.

[Applause]

Now, Bill Lynch would have had us all organized to canvas, to knock on the door of every member of the school leadership team. We all carry that spirit with us. And I want to speak about that for a few moments before we do the unveiling.

I think about Bill pretty much every day. And I suspect there's a lot of you who could say the same. I think about Bill because he taught us all so much. And it's impossible when you have a mentor, a teacher, a leader like that, it's impossible to ever forget because it becomes a part of you. You do things even without realizing it. We – I, certainly every day, I'm simply repeating things Bill taught me or applying lessons that I learned from him day after day after day. And I say day after day, because Bill did have the ability to repeat his favorite sayings.

If it was important to mobilize the citizens of our city, an important cause, he would say, “I need bodies.” We’ve all heard that many times. We all were called to arms. If you presented him with what you thought was a very cogent analysis of why something could work a certain way, but he believed it to be unrealistic, he would look at you and say, “You’re being logical.” If you would make an argument for a great idea and he thought you were on the right track, and then you kept arguing the point, he would say, “My daddy always said, when you already have the keys to the car, stop talking.” There were many, many, many examples like that. But most important was the spirit.

I think for all of us who served as soldiers in Bill Lynch’s army, we just believed in him. We believed anything could happen. We believe all things were possible because we believed in our leader. I always appreciated over the years, Mayor David Dinkins, may he rest in peace, he went out of his way whenever he talked about Bill Lynch, he gave all the credit. He really did. And I think there’s a lot of people – this bears remembrance, we’re here to talk about Bill, but let’s take a moment to appreciate, a lot of leaders struggle to remember the people who actually got them there or the people who made it possible. David Dinkins would honor and acknowledge Bill Lynch without any hesitation or without any specific reason. He would just bring it up proactively because he knew and he felt it.

But what we all felt, the day-to-day people who served under Bill Lynch, we just had a faith that he always knew the way. And sometimes with Bill, it took a lot to figure out where he was going. Bill was a brilliant, brilliant human being. And he saw things that the rest of us couldn’t see. Sometimes it took a while to understand what he was telling us. But I always remember that sense that he had traveled the path before, learned the lessons, that he had such pure inspiration. Bill wanted a different world and believed it could happen. And he made us all believe. And Bill had the ability to show us when we thought all was lost that no, it wasn’t because we could go to the people.

I can’t tell you how many times the solution was, go out to the people, talk to the people, organize the people, believe in the people. In 1989, I remember very vividly, due to my dear friend, Herbert Block, I had the opportunity to get interviewed by Bill for the single lowest paying job on the Dinkins ‘89 campaign. Some of you I see in the crowd, had the highfalutin jobs and the well-paid jobs. I was offered the opportunity to be volunteer coordinator, which was just one step above volunteer.

[Laughter]

And I – as some of you, remember when you had the opportunity to meet with Bill or be interviewed by Bill back in those days, you waited in a long line until a late hour at night. In this case at the now famous campaign headquarters on West 43rd Street. And it bears remembering that our building where our campaign headquarters was on West 43rd Street in 1989, was co-inhabited by other organizations with less savory goals. Just think about Times Square in 1989. Not every tenant in the building was seeking social change, okay. I just want us – I’ll leave it there. I’ll leave it there. And we had some very interesting encounters in the lobby and the elevator.

But you'd wait in line to see Bill. And we all were, so – we felt lucky to be in the line just to see him. And I got my chance to be interviewed. And I walked in, I sat down, and he looks at me, the hundredth meeting of the day. And I remember, he gives me the best interview question I ever experienced in my life. He says, what do you know about New York City politics? And I was like, well, where do you go with that? That's about as open-ended as anything I've heard in my life, but that was Bill. He was looking for the big picture he was looking for, who really felt the cause, the movement. And I'll say to you that when you get exposed to someone that great, it makes you greater – for all of us, it just made us greater.

I always felt a mix about the phrase, ruffled genius. He was ruffled. Let's be honest. There was some rumpling going on. Bill was not particularly concerned what was on his shirt in the course of the day, how it looked, whether it was pressed because it was all up here. But the genius part was 100 percent accurate, pure genius. And amongst the most powerful parts of his genius was the way he could create in people a sense of what they could do that they didn't know they could do before. He called all of us to greatness. Every time we got back together, a lot of people here I remember for over the years, I want to just take a moment to thank everyone, not just for being here, but we wouldn't be able to honor Bill Lynch as our former deputy mayor, and by extension David Dinkins as our mayor, if every one of you who was part of that movement, hadn't been there from day one fighting that fight. So, thank you.

[Applause]

I want to say two more things. The first is it bears remembering how unlikely our mission was. I remember in the spring of 1989, the conventional wisdom was that David Dinkins would not be able to beat Ed Koch, let alone beat Rudy Giuliani later on. And I remember how dismissed David Dinkins often was. And I remember how Bill Lynch just saw right through that. Bill saw New York City as it really was. When often the political class, the media saw a different New York City, a New York City that wasn't today's, at that point, today's New York City, Bill Lynch understood what we were, and he understood the power of people to make a change.

And so, he saw what David Dinkins could create when so much of the conventional wisdom missed it. And he gave you that spirit. He saw it and he communicated it to all of us and we could feel it too. So, if it weren't for someone who could see the future, see through the noise, distill the truth, if it weren't for someone like that, we wouldn't ever have all gotten together and been able to change the city in the ways we did. And one thing that David Dinkins and Bill Lynch both honored was all of you. And I know it because I've heard this in conversations so many times with both of them over the years. They understood one of their core missions was to develop a generation of leaders and activists. And so many people went on to elected office or to change agent movements or media or whatever it may be. But Bill understood, even at that early moment in the story, that he was creating generations and generations of leaders ahead, and that takes a vision that few of us are blessed with.

The last thing I want to say before we unveil, and then we're going to hear from some other colleagues here who have a lot to say. Although, I do want to say, do we want to hold the unveiling for the end? Is that more dramatic? Okay, we're holding an unveiling until the end,

Stacy, your call, Billy your call. Okay. Cancel the unveiling until the end, executive decision. Okay.

But the last thing I want to say is what happened today. So, we're all preparing to celebrate Juneteenth and Bill Lynch taught us – in my view, this was something that came through all the time – take our beliefs and not just feel good about the words we say or the meetings we have or the rallies we have but make it something that reaches real people's lives. Bill was never satisfied with the superficiality. So, as we prepare for Juneteenth, today in our city, we announced the Juneteenth Economic Justice Plan. We are going to invest in thousands of four-year scholarships for African-American CUNY students.

[Applause]

We're going to invest in a Recovery Corps for young people at New York City's only historically Black college, Medgar Evers in Brooklyn.

[Applause]

And this is the one that really, really grabs me. We have seen over the years, the beginnings of an effort to give every young person a savings account to prepare them for the day where if they chose to go to college, they would be ready. Some people call those baby bonds. Today, we announced – and very much with Bill Lynch in spirit watching over us – that starting in September, every kindergartener in New York City from this year and for every year on, will have a savings account, started for them by the City of New York. Baby bonds for every New York City child so they can move forward. And that is economic justice. And that is how we make real change.

[Applause]

So, everyone for a lot of us, and I can say this very personally, I couldn't stand here with you today if it weren't for Bill Lynch. I think a lot of us can say our own version of that, but I have the honor of being your mayor. I simply wouldn't be your mayor if I had not met one day, a man named Bill Lynch. And my life changed, and your lives changed, and our lives changed. He made possible everything we have done since.

With that, I will now introduce someone who – I always give David Dinkins and Bill Lynch credit for this. You know what politicians, people get a little cynical, and they're sort of like, what have you done for me lately? So, with David Dinkins and Bill Lynch, I can always say, well, in addition to giving me a job, they allowed me to meet my wife and have my family. But other than that, what have you done for me lately?

[Laughter]

So, it is my pleasure in that vein to bring forward the light of my life and someone who carries on Bill's lessons in such powerful work she does. And the person has done more to destigmatize

the challenge of mental health in the city than anyone in the history of New York City, our First Lady, Chirlane McCray.

[Applause]

Okay, I'm going to make the First Lady taller.

First Lady Chirlane McCray: That's much better. Good afternoon, everybody.

[Applause]

I'm so happy to see all of you. It's such a wonderful day, such a special day, and it's like a mini reunion. It just makes me feel even warmer all over than I already feel. Again, it's a special day for the Lynch family, Reverend Sharpton, Bill, and me, for all of us who were lucky enough to serve alongside Bill Lynch and get to know him. And it's a really special day for this entire community. And if people are judged by the company they keep, well then, check out this fine assemblage of people. That says it all.

[Applause]

It's true, back in the days of the Dinkins administration, there was another Bill who caught my eye, but I admired Bill Lynch from the very first moment I heard him speak. He was grounded. He didn't beat around the bush. And it wasn't only his political genius. For me, it was about how he treated people, especially the young people in the administration. He supported them. He included them. He brought them into the room when he didn't have to. And the result was that all across the administration, he fostered this love and passion for public service and young people that has played out for decades, as you can see.

And it's so fitting that we come here today to name a public school in his honor because his life, his work will inspire new generations of young people – the unborn, as Reverend Sharpton said – who will all ask about his story, learn about his story, about how he fought to make this city more fair. And I bet when they hear about Bill, many of them will pick up the torch and continue the fight as well.

When the Mayor and I had our own children, I remember Bill Lynch telling us how proud he was of Stacy and Bill, who he used to talk about all the time. And he gave us the most accurate parenting advice anyone ever shared with us. And it was just two words, that's like Bill Lynch, right, get right to the point. Those two words were, don't blink. As in, they will grow up before you know it. He was right about that as – he was right about that as he was about so many other things. And so, today I will leave you by offering that advice to anyone who loves a child and every parent who will send their child, their young people, to this school to grow and learn and carry on Bill's legacy. Don't blink, cherish every second.

And now it's my honor to introduce a great leader who helped make today possible. I spent the morning with her, and I can tell you she is a champion for our young people. I don't think I've ever met anybody quite like her. She brings fairness and opportunity to all of our schools,

making sure every child in our city has the support they need to succeed. Our Schools Chancellor Meisha Porter.

Schools Chancellor Meisha Porter: When are we doing dinner?

First Lady McCray: Soon, soon. Do you want the box?

Chancellor Porter: No, no, no, I got the shoes today. I should have brought my husband so he could have moved the box for me. So, first I want to make sure I acknowledge some important people. Our Mayor, Bill de Blasio for recognizing the importance of this day.

[Applause]

Our First Lady, Chirlane McCray for being such a champion for mental health across this city and bringing it to life in our schools.

[Applause]

The Lynch family, Mary, Bill Jr., Stacy, and Bill Lynch III, Charles Reilly. I want to thank you, the principal of this school, the William Lynch School, for recognizing the importance of this moment.

[Applause]

And before I finish it, this moment is not just about the naming of a building. It's about teaching the legacy of New York City and the history of New York City, and Bill Lynch is such an important part of that. Our young people will be able to walk past these doors every day and walk in this building and learn about a man who changed New York City. I'll tell you, I'm excited to be here. I did not have the honor or privilege of knowing your father, but David Dinkins is the first mayor that I ever voted for. And so, I feel connected in that way.

And I want to just also acknowledge the PA members who made this possible because as we head into Juneteenth, acknowledging true representative history, having a history and names on our buildings, like the Reverend said, that we can celebrate is so critically important and that represent our children and look like them. And so, Erin Ratner, our co-president; Marisa Castagno, our co-president; Klara Naszkowska, our vice-president; Sophie Winborne, vice-president; Christopher Minnick, treasurer; Stephanie Assuras, our secretary; Megan Coryat, our secretary; our executive superintendent for Manhattan, Marisol Rosales; our superintendent, Manny Ramirez.

And of course, so many dignitaries, Reverend Al Sharpton, Hazel Dukes, who's not with us, but her spirit is always in the air. Our Manhattan Borough President – Manhattan Borough President, Gale Brewer, as she reminds me every time, in the borough of Manhattan. Assembly Member Taylor, Council Member Jackson, there's so many important – I'm sorry, Senator Jackson. I'm so sorry but thank you for bringing 100 percent Fair Student Funding to every New York City public school, which is most important.

[Applause]

It's an honor and a pleasure and a privilege for me to be here today, like I said, as we do the most important thing and not just name a building but ensure that our students learn true representative history of New York City, the true heroes of New York City. Bill Lynch dedicated his life to service in New York City. He loved this community. He served as a mentor to so many of our elected officials and dignitaries here today. And today young people will be able to carry his name off into history.

He believed that fostering young people, encouraging them, and becoming active in their communities in this moment when that is so important was not only rewarding, but the responsibility, it's the responsibility of us. I know he would be so incredibly proud that the spirit of that mentorship and the value placed on civic responsibility lives here today, and it lives on in his name. And with that, I'm going to turn it back over to our Mayor, who saw the importance of this day, Bill de Blasio.

[Applause]

Mayor: I just want to say our Chancellor said she didn't have the opportunity to know Bill Lynch, but I can tell you something. I really believe this in my heart, Bill Lynch would have been so happy to see Meisha Ross Porter as our Chancellor.

[Applause]

And I can say this in the warmest spirit, Meisha, your ability to take a powerful mission for justice and turn it into action, that's something that reminds me of the great man we're naming this place after today, but also, I can tell you, you by what you have achieved is exactly what Bill wanted to see. A society where actually everyone's talents got honored and recognized. And so, Bill is smiling down for a lot of reasons today, including that we were standing here in the presence of the first African-American woman to lead the New York City public schools. Congratulations.

[Applause]

Now, I want to bring up a fine representative of the Lynch family. Stacy and Billy both, have in so many ways each their own approach, their own spirit, their own insight, carried on this tradition beautifully. And every good tradition needs to be built and embellished by the next generation in its own way. Bill Lynch didn't run for the kind of public office that Stacy is running for now. I think Bill is smiling down today also because he taught so many of us to take the chance and run for office. And now his daughter is doing that very thing. That's exactly, I think, what would bring a giant smile to his face.

[Applause]

And Billy has been the man behind the scenes, so many great campaigns. So, it takes both pieces of the equation as David Dinkins and Bill Lynch taught us. And here we see it exemplified in the Lynch family. I just have to say it's been a joy, knowing them over the years, Bill – Chirlane is right, he would talk about both of you all the time with joy and with respect and honor for what you have become. And now, as Stacy goes on her own journey, it's moving to me – she served in my administration, she served well, she made an impact for the people of Harlem and for the whole city because she had brains and heart and the ability to get things done. And she actually understood how things worked. And I saw time and time again, when we needed to make something happen, we turned to Stacy Lynch. She was the can-do person. So, the voters will make their own choices. I can only say they'd be really lucky to have her. My pleasure to introduce to you, Stacy Lynch.

[Applause]

[...]

Thank you so much, Stacy. We've had lots of dignitaries here and I know one of our dignitaries has to leave and he's had a very big day with the National Urban League headquarters being ground broken today in New York City. Marc Morial, thank you for joining us today, brother. And congratulations. That's an amazing day for the city and this country. Thank you.

[Applause]

Stacy, please let Mary know we all love her, and we are thinking of her and she is part of all of our families. None of it happens without her too. So, God bless her.

And one thing that Stacy said, and I want to emphasize to the principal, the whole school community. There's a lot of people, when you say the Bill Lynch School needs something, there's a lot of people that are going jump when they hear those words. When you say you want someone to come speak here, or you need some help for something you're trying to get done, or for a child coming out of this school, you've got a couple of magical words now attached to your name. For a lot of us, that's all we have to hear because Bill Lynch taught us – this is one of those eloquent, inspiring things he would say to us, each of us as staffers, here's your job, I want to see how many of you remember this [inaudible]. Remember this one? “Your job is any damn thing, any damn time.”

[Laughter]

So, the – great classic. It made us – it built character, it built character. But Principal, we're going to answer the call when you call. I want you to know that. Now Bill Lynch inspired – I guess you won't forget. Okay. That's good to know. It's good to know. You're making a note. Okay. Make a note of it. Bill Lynch inspired so many young people to do great things. One of them, dear, dear friend of mine, we got into all sorts of political and other types of mischief over the years. And we were joined at the hip through those years and beyond. I am just a lowly mayor, but I got to produce to you now an ambassador. Okay. He reached a very lofty height and Bill loved him and he loved Bill. Ambassador Patrick Gaspard.

[...]

Okay, we're going to do three more things. We're going to have our elected official colleagues come up together and say a few words quickly. We are going to then present a plaque to the Lynch family, and then – the moment you've all been waiting for – the unveiling, the dramatic conclusion. First, I want to welcome Borough President Gale Brewer, Senator Robert Jackson, Assembly Member Al Taylor, and Council Member Mark Levine. Come up, everyone share a few words.

[Applause]

[...]

Principal, come on up. Bring any of your leadership because this is about you. Chancellor, come on up. Alright, Stacy, come on over. Bill, come on over. You come right over here. I'm going to use the microphone on the other side of the podium. This is very controversial. Okay –

[Laughter]

I'm breaking all the rules, people. This plaque – I'm going to read it as I hand it to you. "In recognition of his service to the Borough of Manhattan and the City of New York, and his tireless efforts to foster a government that raises up all New Yorkers, the Administrative and Parent Leadership of P. S. 368 Hamilton Heights School has voted to honor Bill Lynch and change its name to the William "Bill" Lynch School.

[Applause]

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