



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

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**CONTACT:** [pressoffice@cityhall.nyc.gov](mailto:pressoffice@cityhall.nyc.gov), (212) 788-2958

**RUSH TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO DELIVERS REMARKS AT MEMORIAL SERVICE FOR  
EAST HARLEM EXPLOSION AND BUILDING COLLAPSE**

**Mayor Bill de Blasio:** Thank you. I want to thank Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito for putting together this memorial, but more so for all she did to lead this community in an hour of deep need and pain. I want to thank her for her perseverance and her love for her community. I want to thank everyone who is here, who is part of this day to remember those we lost, and to thank those who helped – everyone who helped the families dislocated and the families in pain.

A year ago, this whole city was rocked by this tragedy. Without warning, a gas leak sparked an explosion. Literally, for so many families, their world changed in just an instant. There's no warning. There's nothing that would have told them that morning that so much was about to change and so much pain was about to occur. We lost eight good people – scores of others injured. Two buildings destroyed – dozens more damaged. And we still feel it in so many ways. So many people are living the effects of that day. And – as is so often true in this city – in the midst of tragedy, New Yorkers show us something so strong, and so resilient, and so good, as an answer to the suffering. And we saw acts of heroism, and bravery, and compassion.

I want to talk about our first responders, and I want to join the speaker in condemning the despicable attack on the two police officers in Ferguson. And I want to wish them both a very speedy recovery. This is a day we honor our first responders. I was reminded earlier of the fact that as the explosion occurred in this community – as you could feel the vibrations all around this neighborhood from that explosion – men and women stationed at the 2-5 Precinct did not wait even a moment to ask what to do. They ran out the door immediately to the danger and they helped to save lives. Almost instantly they were on the scene as a part of their commitment. Let's talk about the firefighters who were here, dealing with this – such a painful situation in the fierce winds of those days, with buildings – we didn't know whether they would stay up or fall down – still searching for life amidst the wreckage. Those firefighters kept fighting on. Our first responders made us very proud that day and reminded us of what is good about this place.

And so many every day New Yorkers, so many good Samaritans – there was one who pulled an injured boy from the rubble before he was in even greater danger. There was an ex-Marine who saved an FBI agent who happened to be on the scene in his car when the explosion occurred. And in fact, if the ex-marine hadn't come by, we might have lost that public servant. There was a delivery man who rescued a great-grandmother. People rose to the occasion. They knew it was the right thing to do and they did it. And then people kept coming back in so many ways, giving of themselves, supporting the family members, giving the resources. So many people answered the call of the Mayor's Fund, and we thank you because we needed help to provide housing, and counseling, and all the support the families deserved, and the dignified funerals for those we lost. And people from all over the city agencies came here with a sense of mission – every kind of agency trying to find a way to help and lighten the burden.

And then there were people in the community who kept trying to find a way to help each other and were adamant about rebuilding – one of them, Dimitri Gatanas, who owns the Urban Garden Center right here. In the morning of the blast, his shop was destroyed. People from city agencies were adamant about helping Dimitri get back on his feet. They helped him in every way they could. They covered his rent. And he said – and in the

midst of all the pain and difficulty, he saw something uplifting. A quote from Dimitri, he said, “It was a work of art – the way all the agencies worked in tandem. It was special” – it was special that people turned a moment of despair into something good. Dimitri then sought to help his fellow neighbors in every way he could. And he said, quote “Our customers, our neighbors, people from all over the city came to help us. It was a beautiful thing.” Dimitri experienced something that we, as New Yorkers, have known too often. Too often we’ve known tragedy, but every time we have seen that strength and that goodness in the response. The world has seen what New York is made of time and time again. And we will stand by – as is the New York way – we will stand by these families. We’ll make sure that their needs are answered. And those we lost will always be in our thoughts and prayers.

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