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**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR ERIC ADAMS LAUNCHES ‘BREAKING BREAD,
BUILDING BONDS’ CITYWIDE TO COMBAT RISING HATE AND FOSTER
MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING**

Rabbi Joanna Samuels, CEO, Marlene Meyerson JCC Manhattan: Welcome to the Marlene Meyerson JCC Manhattan. Welcome to you, Mr. Mayor, and to all of our wonderful, distinguished guests. I am Rabbi Joanna Samuels. I am very proud to be the CEO of this wonderful organization. On behalf of all of us at the JCC, including our exceptional board chair Jeff Feig, we want you to know what a great honor it is to host this kickoff of a program that gives us so much hope, a program that will bring New Yorkers together across all of our diversities to break bread in community.

We are together this evening in a Beit Midrash. A Beit Midrash is a Hebrew phrase that means the house of study. And if you look at all of these books that line our walls, they are filled you should know, with the prayers and hopes and ideas of our ancestors who from the time of Abraham and Sarah, our forefather and foremother, sought to redeem and repair this world and all that's broken within it.

The Torah tells the story of Abraham and Sarah who opened up their desert tent to three strangers in the heat of the day. Abraham welcomed them, gave them water, allowed them to rest and wash their feet. And Sarah, she cooked a meal for them. She cooked the best meal for them. And what did these three strangers do? Well, they turned out actually to be angels. They were God's representatives, and they gave Abraham and Sarah the best news that they could have imagined. Abraham and Sarah learned from these guests at their table that they, an elderly couple who couldn't bear a child, they learned that they in fact would come to be parents of a son within this very same year.

With their tent open to visitors who needed a meal and some rest, Abraham and Sarah taught us and they taught the world what it means to come together to break bread. They taught us that opening our homes and our tables to others is our religious obligation, and that this obligation is our greatest privilege. Abraham and Sarah taught us that opening our homes and our tables to

others opens us up as well, to opportunity, to knowledge and to blessings that we never could have predicted.

In my opinion, the best moments in religious life are those when the words in our books and our texts come alive in our present day. In welcoming Mayor Eric Adams here to the JCC to announce an initiative that will bring New Yorkers together to break bread, to be together over their meals, to imagine what can take place over the sacred altar of our dinner tables, I feel in this moment that our religious tradition and that all of our religious traditions, both sacred and secular, are living and breathing forces for good. May we build this world together that we imagine one dinner table at a time. And I'm thrilled to introduce New York City's mayor, Eric Adams.

Mayor Eric Adams: Thank you, thank you. One dinner table at a time, and this was an initiative we did in Brooklyn Borough Hall when I was a Borough President with 47 percent of Brooklynites spoke a language other than English at home. But it was clear that we were living in silos, and we were afraid of our differences instead of leaning into what I believe is our most secret and potent weapon, and that is our diversity. And nothing brings comfort to a person's face than if you greet them in some way that is respecting who they are.

To say buenas noches, to say shalom, to say ni hao, just these simple words. All of a sudden you watch people allow their defenses to go down. And sitting around a table, sharing a meal, and doing something revolutionary, talking to each other. That's what Breaking Bread, Building Bonds is about. It is allowing us to sit in a room which oftentimes we rarely do, with people we don't know that don't look like us, don't talk like us, don't speak the same language, wear different articles or clothing. It could be a kufi, a hijab, a yarmulke, it could be a dashiki, it could be a turban.

And I was really blown away when we did those first series of dinners to watch people sit around the table and smiles break out and you are able to describe and ask the questions you always wanted to answer or to inquire about. Why, as a Sikh, do you wear a turban? Why do you do various events throughout the years? What it is to sit in a sukkah? What it is, and what Kwanzaa means? What are the different article of clothing? Why does women in the Muslim community wear hijab? What is the purpose of that? Why does one grow a beard? Why do you wear a black article of clothing in Williamsburg or Borough Park or out in Flatbush? What does it mean to be part of the Satmar community?

Or what does it mean to come from one of the Caribbean or African diasporas and participate in this country? And those answers are amazing. It turns us all into students and it revitalizes our energy and start to respect each other. So when we enter a subway system and we see the diversity on that train, we no longer feel as though this person is different, but we're so much alike. We go to a mosque, a Baptist church, a Buddhist temple, a synagogue, we go there for the same reasons, to find reason and purpose for what is our purpose. And I'm excited about the potential of 1,000 meals. You do the math. 1,000 meals across the city, minimum of 10 people, that turns into 10,000 people. And then we encourage each one of those 10,000 to also host a meal that turns into 100,000 people. 100,000 people becoming an ambassador to show that don't we tolerate each other, but we respect each other.

This is, probably out of everything I have done as the Mayor of this city, this is probably something that is so important to me, because even if we get over our economy, if we defeat Covid, even if we're able to build all the housing we want, and if we get all of the violence off our streets, if we do all those things and we still have people who don't respect each other as neighbors, then we failed at a city. We cannot hide behind brick and mortar to take the place of the building blocks of our human existence. And so Breaking Bread, Building Bonds is allowing us to appreciate the lubricated value of a meal and sit there and talk to each other. And we are going to do the kickoff here in this room, and we're looking for our business leaders to host a dinner.

We're looking for our teachers to host a dinner, our rabbis and priests to host a dinner, our imams to host a dinner, we're looking for baseball teams to host a dinner. We are looking for everyone to state, "We will host a dinner. And even if we cannot host a dinner, we will participate in a dinner so we can start the conversation of talking, and most importantly, of healing." We've gone through a lot after Covid. If we want to acknowledge it or not, we did not come out the same. It has traumatized us. Many of us have benchmarked our lives by the loved ones we lost during Covid, or those who are dealing with mental health illnesses because of what Covid did to us. This is our opportunity to heal. And I'm glad that we're going to break bread and build bonds together. Thank you so much for hosting us.

Samuels: Thank you so much. Today we are joined by K Scarry, the director of partnerships from The People's Supper. The People's Supper is a wonderful organization that strongly believes in the importance of intentionally investing in critical conversations that bring our community together.

K Scarry, Director of Partnerships, The People's Supper: Thank you so much. It is so lovely to be with you all. I'm K Scarry, the director of partnerships for the Dinner Party Labs, which means I lead The People's Supper. And we work with communities all over the country to create the conditions for trust building for people across identity and ideological difference. We address the deep issues of isolation and fragmentation that often run rampant in our communities. And we see social isolation, like Mayor Adams said, as one of the problems that undergirds many of the other issues that face our communities. And so we believe deeply that social connection must be part of our solution.

I'm so delighted to be here and I'm so looking forward to working alongside all of you in the coming months. We believe that relationship building and policy change go hand in hand, and we believe that this is a chance for us to work towards a New York City where connection is the antidote to hate, and where together, we can envision a different way forward for all New Yorkers. At the Breaking Bread, Building Bonds table, we'll see some city agency workers get in conversation with the people their work impacts. At the Breaking Bread, Building Bonds tables, we'll have a chance to build real trust with one another, that will sustain us through whatever comes. At the Breaking Bread, Building Bonds table, we'll gain tools to interrupt our assumptions about each other, to lean into curiosity about one another, and to practice believing that it's worth seeing the story behind the stories in each other.

I came in this morning from Washington, D.C., so I feel like I can say that our country has watched New York City stand together before and we've watched New York City model what it means to be in deep solidarity with each other. We are inspired at The People's Supper by the Breaking Bread, Building Bonds initiative and can't wait for the chance for New York to continue to show other communities what it looks like to stand against hate in all its forms. We're going to do that by pulling up a chair for our neighbors, by going deep together and building a New York City that works for all of us. Thank you so much.

Samuels: We are joined also by Eric Goldstein, CEO of UJA-Federation of New York. UJA plays an integral role in embracing and cultivating the diversity of all New Yorkers, and is a great friend to the JCC.

Eric Goldstein, CEO, UJA-Federation of New York: Thank you, Joanna. This institution, this JCC is a critical gateway to community and we're so grateful for all it does and we are very proud to have supported this JCC from the beginning. So we are here to express enormous gratitude to the Mayor, the Office for the Prevention of Hate Crimes, the mayor's Community Affairs Unit, for prioritizing this critical initiative. We know how critically important it is to come together. As the mayor said, diversity is the secret source of this incredible city. But too many of us, we may live near each other, but we don't know each other. And it's vital. You can't instinctively do this.

You need to purposefully bring diverse communities together, which is why we're so grateful for this wonderful initiative of the mayor's Breaking Bread, Building Bonds. What better way than food to bring us together? We all have a common love of food, some of us maybe more than others, but the bottom line is this is an incredibly important initiative that UJA is delighted to support. We raise over \$200 million a year in charitable contributions that we give out each year to support the most vulnerable among us, people of all backgrounds, to help grow and sustain Jewish community but bring it very much into relationship with the entire city and beyond. So again, incredible gratitude to the mayor and his staff for putting this together. And we are very enthusiastic participants. Thank you.

Samuels: Finally, a great honor to introduce Hassan Naveed, who's the executive director of the New York City Office for the Prevention of Hate Crimes. Thank you so much.

Hassan Naveed, Executive Director, Office for the Prevention of Hate Crimes: Thank you so much, Rabbi Samuels. My name is Hassan Naveed. I'm the executive director for the Office for the Prevention of Hate Crimes. OPHC is honored to help lead the mayor's initiative in breaking bread and building bonds between New Yorkers across all five boroughs. This initiative embodies this administration's commitment to embrace and cultivate the immense diversity of our city. And at a time when hate crimes are on the rise, this initiative seeks to unite all of us against the virus of hate.

Breaking Bread, Building Bonds is movement-building, and I encourage all New Yorkers to join this movement. Sign up and be a host or participate as a person who's a participant, by visiting nyc.gov/breakingbread or call 311 and say "Breaking Bread, Building Bonds". And be on the lookout. All of us of our city agencies are coming together to plan and host meals with shared

conversations throughout the city. From NYPD to the mayor's Community Affairs Unit, our city and its agencies are mobilizing communities to come together, break bread, learn about each other, and build bonds.

I want to thank Rabbi Samuels and our staff at the Marlene Meyerson JCC for being the first to host today's inaugural conversation. I also want to thank community members in groups, community members in groups for coming today. You represent the diversity of our city. You are our strength, and Mayor Adams and this administration is committed to protecting that diversity.

Shortly, we'll be making our way to the tables itself to model a meal. And so before I do that, I wanted to thank many of the organizations that have joined us here today. And I'll quickly just name some of them as well too. To the Asian American Federation, the Anti-Violence Project, the Muslim Community Network, the 67th Precinct Clergy Council, the Destination Tomorrow, the Arab American Association of New York, Hispanic Federation, UJA-Federation of New York, Epic Village, and of course, some city agencies as well too. Thank you all so much and we can take questions as well too. Thank you.

(Crosstalk.)

Mayor Adams: I just want to... My longtime colleague has really personified the importance of bringing people together. She's done it as the Councilperson, borough president, now Councilperson again, and my long (inaudible) we served together as borough president. I just want her to say a few words, because she has really shown the skillset of bringing us together. Councilperson Gale Brewer.

City Council Member Gale Brewer: Thank you very much. I appreciate that we are at JCC because this is an organization that has personified, as the mayor has stated, that coming together. This is a location where events from all kinds of people take place. So it's just an honor to be here at JCC. And I want to say to the mayor, thank you. But once a B.P., always a B.P. Because when he was B.P. and I was B.P., to his credit, he was always having these meetings. I'm like, "How come we can't do this in Manhattan?" So I'm so happy that we're here at JCC.

And I just want to say, in terms of knowing people, I just took the subway here, it's always the best way. But I'm always nervous about getting on because you never know who's going to say, "Hi, Gale, I have a housing problem." So this person was great. We talked about... There's no subway getting on. Mayor's the same way, some of you without somebody knowing. But the best was last week I got on, and the guy who's collecting the money and hassling everybody, "Hi Gale, how are you?" Thank you very much, it's great to be here today.

Naveed: Okay, thank you. And actually, we're going to get seated. So if folks can find their seats, please do that.

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