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**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO, FIRST LADY MCCRAY DELIVERS REMARKS
AT THE NEW YORK CITY JUNETEENTH CELEBRATION**

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Juneteenth, starting right now, right here in Harlem. But we have very special guests on a very tight schedule, and we want to bring them up because in the entire country, in this whole country today we can say that Juneteenth is a national holiday in the United States of America.

[Applause]

And the man who made sure that the United States Senate passed that bill and would not let it wait is our senator, Majority Leader Chuck Schumer.

Majority Leader Charles Schumer: Thank you, Mayor de Blasio. Happy Juneteenth.

[Applause]

This is long overdue. We all know that slavery officially ended in 1865, but we also all know that, in many ways, slavery is still with us and we have to fight it every day – every day. And let me just say this, they tried -- some of those nasty Republicans -- To not let the bill go through the Senate, but I made sure it did. It is now law. It is long overdue. And we will remember the scar, the original and long-lasting scar in America, slavery and racism. And we will fight it every single day. Thank you. God bless you and Happy Juneteenth, everybody.

[Applause]

[...]

First Lady Chirlane McCray: Lovely. Thank you for that beautiful invocation, Emmanuel Hunter -- Reverend Hunter. Happy Juneteenth, everybody.

[Cheers]

I'm so happy to be celebrating in Harlem. Langston Hughes, Harlem. Melting pot, Harlem. "Harlem of honey, and chocolate, and caramel, and rum, and vinegar, and lemon, and lime and gall." Zora Neale Hurston's honey. Sonia Sanchez' is honey, Harlem. Our Harlem. Who's Harlem?

Audience: Our Harlem!

First Lady McCray: Who's Harlem?

Audience: Our Harlem!

First Lady McCray: I want to thank you. I want to say thank you to Street Corner Resources, to Brooklyn School of the Arts, to the Secret Society Dance Company, Marching Cobras, to everyone who put this event together and all our Juneteenth celebration citywide. Can we give them a hand, please?

[Applause]

I especially want to thank Apple Music and DJ Tommy Lee for emceeing, for pouring those incredible sounds in the air, and energizing us all with the music. Please give them a hand too.

[Applause]

Alright, now, today is a day to celebrate the strength of our ancestors. Remembering what they went through helps us put our own lives in perspective. No matter how difficult it was for them, they looked for joy. They made room for joy whenever they weren't able to, which helped them to go on living. Today is also a day to think about what it means to be free. Yes, it takes laws, but the lesson of Juneteenth is that it takes a whole lot more than laws to set people free, right? It takes many people working together to get the word out, to make sure that those laws are enforced, to make sure that community accepts those laws. And so, Juneteenth is really about all of us, Black, Brown, white, Asian, every kind of New Yorker, working for the kind of city we have to build where there is justice, and fairness, and everyone has opportunity.

If we are going to build that city, we have to look history in the eye. We have to understand where we came from, why, and how we survived. So, that's why I have a request for every single one of you here tonight. Are you ready?

Audience: Yes!

First Lady McCray: I said, are you ready? When you go home tonight, or maybe tomorrow, I want you to learn something new about your own family, your own family history. I want you to talk to your parents, your grandparents, or your uncles, or your cousins. Ask them questions, listen to their stories, record them or write them down. Can you do that?

Audience: Yes!

First Lady McCray: I said, can you do that?

Audience: Yes!

First Lady McCray: All right. Black history is American history, can you say that? Black history is American history. These stories that you're going to write down are our stories, our history. These stories stay alive and get passed down only if we keep them alive. Who's got to keep them alive?

Audience: We do.

First Lady McCray: That's right. Now, I have the pleasure, the great pleasure of introducing a young person who will delight you with her wordcraft, with her testimonies, with her stories that bridge the past to the present. She is a born and bred New Yorker, poet storyteller from Brooklyn, and she is now a student at Sarah Lawrence. And we are the lucky ones to have her with us tonight. So please, please welcome Miah Prescod.

[...]

Mayor: Wasn't she amazing? That is a poet. That is someone who speaks truth. God bless her. God bless her. Now, everybody, there's a song some of you may know – maybe you've got to be a little older to know it – but remember the song, “you are so beautiful to me?” Remember that? I wish everyone up on the hill here could see everyone up on the hill here, because it is a beautiful picture of Harlem, and New York City, and this beautiful moment in history. God blessed you all.

[Applause]

I want to do some quick thank you's. So that we could be here today, first of all, you must, you must, you must always thank the DJ. DJ, Tommy Lee, thank you.

[Applause]

We are joined by wonderful dignitaries. I'll just say, to everyone who serves us in public service, thank you, but a special shout out to the first woman, Black woman district attorney in New York State, Darcel Clark of the Bronx. Thank you.

[Cheers]

We also have here some of the members of something absolutely powerful in this city. Unlike any place else in America, we have said, we will identify structural racism, institutional racism, name it, and eradicate it. We have a Racial Justice Commission to do that work and change this city. Let's thank the members of the Racial Justice Commission who are here with us today.

[Applause]

The James Baldwin Lawn is a perfect place to talk about the power of Juneteenth, because James Baldwin's voice rang out asking us not to look away from painful truths. He identified them for us so we could do something about it, we could act on them. We did not have to accept them. And in that spirit today, we talk about change. Juneteenth is not just a wistful memory.

Juneteenth is not just an excuse for a barbecue or a civic gathering. Juneteenth is a moment to recommit ourselves to change, to action, to not accepting the status quo that we all know is still broken.

[Applause]

And so, we announced yesterday in this city three things in the spirit of Juneteenth to make sure it was more than just moments of appreciation, or gatherings, or events, but action. First, at our New York City Historically Black College Medgar Evers College, we are starting a Recovery Corps. We are paying young students at Medgar Evers to help bring our city back, to be part of the change in the comeback of New York City.

[Applause]

Second, if we want to change things, we have to help those who wish to get a college education to actually be able to afford a college education. So, for thousands of our CUNY students, the City of New York will now provide for young African-American students, our future, four-year scholarships for CUNY.

[Applause]

And, finally, and this is about the essence of things – generational wealth. We know the painful truth, white families in America are 10 times more endowed with generational wealth than Black families. But guess what? The Black families created so much of that wealth, but never got to share in it. And so, if we're going to address generational wealth, we need to do something for our children. We need to start from their earliest years, savings accounts, and we need to keep contributing and more and more, so by the time they're ready for college, the money is there for them. So, starting in September, every kindergarten student in the New York City public schools will have a savings account begun for them by the City of New York to help them on their pathway to college and building generational wealth for this community.

[Applause]

That is how we celebrate Juneteenth, brothers and sisters. Now, this is how we do it. That'd be a good lyric. Okay. I'm going to write a song with that in it. All right. Now, we also take the occasion of Juneteenth to thank those who are doing the right thing. And one thing I always appreciate when someone is an artist, or an actor, or performer, and they become famous, they have a choice – they could go off into that life of fame and fortune and celebrity and the elite, or they could stay connected to the people. I want to honor someone who remembers where she came from and cares about doing something for the community. She is an actor. She is a singer. She is a songwriter. She's born in New Jersey, but no one is perfect.

[Laughter]

She got better, she now calls Brooklyn home. She won two NAACP Image Awards for playing the character of Tasha St. Patrick in the Stars drama, Power. She was on Broadway for three

years in Hairspray. And no matter how busy she is, she always gives back. And I want you to hear this, her foundation, Naturi's Dreamers Foundation, fed over 10,000 families in New York and New Jersey during this pandemic.

[Applause]

And she wants to create generational wealth, so she's teaching financial literacy to young people so they can be ready to create and keep that generational wealth. I'm not going to call her up until the sirens are gone, because we're New Yorkers, we know how to work around that. But I have a proclamation coming. Thank you very much, it has magically appeared in my hand. It's my pleasure to call to the stage a great actor, and a great humanitarian, and now a great New Yorker, Naturi Naughton.

[Applause]

Naturi, I want you -- if you would hold up that proclamation for the world to see. It says lots of things about you, all deserved, but I'm just going to read the famous last line. Of course, the last line, which I particularly like, because it's about you -- it says, now, I, Bill de Blasio, Mayor of the City of New York, do hereby proclaim Friday, June 18th, 2021, in the City of New York, as Naturi Naughton -- excuse me, I got all together there -- Naturi Naughton, in the City of New York. Congratulations, you've got your own day named after you.

[Applause]

[...]

Mayor: Everybody, the young people at Street Corner Resources go out talk to people, move people, change people, stop violence. Let's help and let's thank these young people for all they do.

[Applause]

A very bright future when you look at these young people. Everyone, I also want to say before we get into a little celebration. Iesha Sekou said something very powerful about the trauma that this nation has left so many people with. It is work we will be doing for a long time to undo that trauma. But one I want to honor our First Lady for is that she has done the work to address the mental health crisis that pervades this city. And I want to thank her for helping to de-stigmatize mental health illness in this city and show people there is a way forward. So, if anybody in your life is feeling that trauma, if anybody in your life needs help, 24 hours a day, you can call 888-NYC-Well. 24 hours a day in multiple languages for free, anyone who needs a trained counselor to help them is there for them. Say it with me, 888-NYC-Well.

Audience: 888-NYC-Well --

Mayor: Louder -- 888-NYC-Well. We can help each other.

First Lady McCray: That's not loud enough. Come on, you can do better than that, please. 888-NYC-Well!

Audience: 888-NYC-Well!

First Lady McCray: Very good.

Mayor: Much better. That's a way to help everyone in your life, everybody. Let's thank our first lady for making that happen for all of us. Now, I think after we've talked about such important matters, it's time for a little celebration. And we are blessed, we don't just have anybody here with us. We have Marching Cobras here with us. The Marching Cobras' drum line and dancers, let's welcome them. Happy Juneteenth, everybody.

[Applause]

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