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TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO HOLDS MEDIA AVAILABILITY

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Good morning, everybody. We gather on a very important day, a very important day for our city, a very important day for our nation – Juneteenth. Juneteenth is a celebration, a celebration of liberation, but the larger truth is it's a celebration of a liberation that never really came. The fact is it's also a day of reckoning. In the beginning, the notion of emancipation seemed real. Everyone who knows their history knows it was squashed from the very beginning and African American people in this country had to fight even when, in theory, the law was on their side, the reality was not. And that is one of the many reasons why Juneteenth needs to be remembered and felt, celebrated, but reflected upon too. Four hundred years of American history tells us one simple thing, many, many stories, but one simple truth – for 400 years, one group of Americans has been treated profoundly unequally. One group of Americans has been, in so many ways, unwelcomed, even though they built this country as much or more than so many others. And this reality happens in many ways, in the most overt and horrifying ways like slavery, segregation openly, white fountains and black fountains, all the things we grew up seeing and were horrified by. But then it continues in ways that are extraordinarily painful. Sometimes subtle, sometimes unspoken, whether it's in our criminal justice system or in all the symbols that pervade our society.

So, our city has long prided itself in being a beacon, and in many ways, we are to the world. Our city has a lot to be proud of in terms of being a place where everyone could come together and do something different. But our city, it also has a very painful history. Slavery was alive and well in New York City for a long time. New York City gained much of its prominence and wealth from slavery. Redlining, discrimination of every form existed here in liberal, progressive New York City for generations. In too many ways, discrimination is alive and well today. Structural racism pervades this city in ways that are still not acknowledged and recognized, and we have to change that. And it's going to be a very difficult, challenging process, but we can do it because this city has proven itself capable of taking on immense challenges before. Now, the fact is that there's been an incessant effort over centuries of this country's history and this city's history to sweep under the rug these truths. And this is why Juneteenth is so important because it is a day for truth-telling, it is a day for examination and shining a light. And it's a holiday that in fact, millions and millions of Americans don't even know exists. But now as it comes to the fore, it is perfect as a moment for change, for transformation.

We know this is one of those rare historical moments where all things are possible and we've seen it play out not only in the voices that have been raised over the last weeks for change, profound change – the tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands of people marching all over the country, but we saw it in the months before. The horror at the disparities dredged up by the

coronavirus and the fact that it was clear, we could not go back. We could not go back to a broken status quo. And we were being handed, even through the pain, a transformational moment that could only be compared to what our forbearers experienced in the 1930s. When so many of the great changes occurred in this country or our forbearers experienced in the 1950s and 60s with the Civil Rights Movement. Whether it's the New Deal, the Civil Rights Movement, or any other historical marker you want to choose, this is a transformational moment and I promise you, our city will lead the way.

Starting next year, Juneteenth will be an official city holiday and official New York City schools holiday. We'll work with all the unions to work through the plan, give this day the importance and recognition it deserves. Every City worker, every student will have an opportunity to reflect on the meaning of our history and the truth, and to think about the work that we have to do ahead. Because one thing that is profoundly clear in the history of African people in this country is that through the pain and struggle came an extraordinary purposefulness and vision and ability to see change and act on change, make change occur. The movements led by African American people changed this country to the core and will continue to. So, this is just a beginning to acknowledge this holiday, but we have a lot more to do. I want to turn to two very important people to me, to tell you more. And I want to preface by saying both are dear to me, one as a dear friend, and one as the love of my life and my partner in all things. They co-chair our Task Force on Racial Inclusion and Equity, but each brings to this, not just their own extraordinary experience – and I know with absolute certainty, I've watched for decades, the work of change that each of them have done, but they bring history with them as well. Phil Thompson talked so powerfully a few days ago about his own family's experience with slavery about his own forbearers being enslaved by the family of Robert E. Lee. He will now talk about the power and meaning of Juneteenth. Our First Lady, Chirlane McCray, comes from a family, filled with pride over generations – her great grandmother, a follower and lieutenant of Marcus Garvey. These are people who have the struggle and the fight in their bloodstream, and they're acting on it now through this task force right now. So, with that, I'll turn first to Deputy Mayor Phil Thompson, and then to First Lady Chirlane McCray.

Deputy Mayor J. Phillip Thompson, Strategic Initiatives: Thank you, Mr. Mayor. Juneteenth, sometimes called Freedom Day, celebrates the end of the enslavement of people of African descent in the United States. It also represents the end of the Civil War, a war that claimed the lives of over 700,000 people in a nation of 30 million at the time. Today, this would be the equivalent of over six million lives lost. Why was the Civil War so hard fought? The bodies of black slaves in 1861 represented the largest stock of property in the entire country. The Civil War was a war over the rights of property owners versus human rights, the basic right of Black people to equality. And it was a blow against the myth of Black inferiority. Second, millions of white farmers and workers realized that if the powerful slave aristocracy continued, the slave owners would grab all of the most valuable land west of the Mississippi and all of the key resources of the country and leave them destitute as well.

The early women's movement saw the fight against slavery as a blow against the denial of equal rights of all people. And they believe that the fight against slavery would strengthen the struggle of women for equality. And they were all correct. Juneteenth has an international aspect. The fight for freedom was always international. Over a million New Yorkers descend from slave

families that experienced slavery outside the borders of the United States, whether in the Caribbean, Central America, or Latin America. The long Haitian Revolution against slavery that ended in 1804 inspired and directly supported anti-slavery activists in the United States. The Haitian Revolution was itself aided by Simone Bolivar and the Venezuelan Liberation Movement. The Irish Liberation Movement and British Anti-Slavery Movements contributed heavily to the war against slavery in the United States. French anti-slavery activists commissioned the construction of the Statue of Liberty in 1866 in honor of the American defeat of slavery the year before. And they raised the money to build it themselves.

Juneteenth also contains a reminder, not just for African Americans, but for all people who believe in democracy and equality. June 19th, 1865 is the day that federal troops arrived in rural Texas and informed slaves there that they were free. Congress had actually freed slaves two years earlier with the 13th Amendment and the Confederate Army had been defeated two months earlier, but this information had been hidden from Black people in rural Texas. The reminder is that freedom and democracy doesn't live on a piece of paper. Democratic rights have to be understood and acted upon by the people or else they will not exist. Our Department of Education, as the New York City philosopher John Dewey argued, is a critical institution for cultivating active citizenship and sustaining democracy, first and foremost, among young people. Our Department of Education is using Juneteenth today to impart important lessons from the Black struggle for freedom to all of our young people. Today, teachers citywide have lesson plans focused on Juneteenth and its meaning today. Perhaps the anti-slavery leader, Frederick Douglass summarized it best – without struggle there is no progress and power concedes nothing without demand. Thank you.

Mayor: Thank you, Deputy Mayor. And now with a very important announcement, thank you for the great work of the task force in preparing for this, our First Lady, Chirlane McCray.

First Lady Chirlane McCray: Today, we proudly announced the formation of a Racial Justice and Reconciliation Commission to establish a definitive historical record of racial discrimination in New York City. This commission is designed to provide New Yorkers a platform to voice their experiences. It will also promote social learning, collective introspection, and other measures to tear down the barriers to true equality. The commission will identify policy areas where discrimination exists, including employment, housing, criminal justice, environment, education, and health. New York City is the first major United States city or state to undergo a comprehensive truth and reconciliation process. A few words in Spanish –

[First Lady McCray speaks in Spanish]

It is fitting that we announced the commission on the holiday of Juneteenth. First celebrated in Texas on June 19th, 1865. The Civil War had ended, enslaved people in Texas were legally free, but that truth, as Deputy Mayor Thompson said, was deliberately withheld by the enslavers allowing them to maintain the labor force on the plantations. In this moment of reckoning in 2020 protesters are chanting Black Lives Matter from coast to coast, demanding that this country live up to its ideals. The commission will work to explode the false narratives we have lived with for far too long and make plain the truth that even in 2020 to be a person of color means to live a parallel existence with white New Yorkers. That reality needs to be understood beyond

communities of color. That truth must inform the curriculum in our schools, our history books, the memorials we honor, and even how we perceive one another. The Racial Justice and Reconciliation Commission will collect the information and stories we need to educate and inform, to spur a deeper understanding of the frustrations, anger, and guilt produced when we talk about race.

The commission will examine how the disease of racism has infected all facets of our lives in New York City, from the disruption of families, to the seizure of land and other hard earned assets, from the parade of humiliations that declare we are worthless human beings to the systems that thwart the ability to accumulate wealth, racism has shaped our everyday practices and policies and is reflected in our behaviors and our norms. Terms like institutional and structural racism do not do justice to their toll and suffering and the incredible waste of human potential. It does not get at the devastation of being passed over for jobs, rejected for bank loans, intelligence questioned or denied by teachers, qualifications challenged. It does not get at the insult of being followed in stores or the agony of imagining your son dead or injured when he is simply out late with a friend. Why have Black and Brown communities been disproportionately decimated by COVID-19? Why are underpaid and dying essential workers, mostly people of color? Why do Black and Brown New Yorkers have less education, less wealth, and poorer health overall than white New Yorkers? How have immigration policies been designed to pit ethnic minorities against each other with stereotypes placed upon Asian-Americans, such as the “model minority.” The work begins by admitting that, too often, we claim and perpetuate a story that is incomplete or simply not true.

The house my family and I have the privilege of living in, Gracie Mansion, was built in 1799 by people who were enslaved and indentured servants, a fact that is not detailed in any of the official books about the residence that I have read. Although Gracie held membership in New York's Manumission Society, whose mission was to end slavery, I found out only yesterday that Archibald Gracie held in bondage, three Americans named Sarah, Abraham, and Charles Short. As a trade merchant between Great Britain and the new American Republic, Gracie's name lives on as a success story. His wealth and prominence relied on the export of goods, like cotton, tobacco, and indigo – all produced with the labor of people who are enslaved. The lives and the voices of Sarah, Abraham, and Charles have been lost to history.

The festering wounds of history have not healed. Blood continues to spill on our streets, trauma is passed down from generation to generation. The protests continue. As New Yorkers and as Americans, we live with a plague of half-truths that tangle and restrain all of us. As Fannie Lou Hamer said, none of us are free until all of us are free. Reconciliation is not an alternative to justice, but it is necessary to build trust. We can correct the record. We can clean our wounds. We can begin anew when the truth is told. And that is possible now more than ever in this world of instant connection and interconnectedness. I believe that our dreams are more powerful than the pain and the facts that have come before us, and hope is the ability to see light despite the pain. So, let us move forward. Thank you.

Mayor: Thank you so much. Very beautiful and very powerful. Chirlane and I were talking over the last couple of days about why such a commission is needed, why this approach has helped bring out truths and lead to action around the world. And she offered one immediate example

that really struck me – so much of the life of the city, the physical reality of this city was built upon the racist precepts of an architect and builder and a government official named Robert Moses. And the fact that we live in a physical reality that was explicitly created to divide and segregate is an example of how much we have to examine and undo. And I think everyone understands listening to Chirlane’s words and Phil’s words, this’ll be difficult, painstaking work, but it has to happen, acknowledging the truth, recognizing the structures that must be changed and putting ourselves to the work, no matter how many months and years it takes is the right way forward for this city. And we have to, in every way we can send a message of change. You know, a couple of weeks ago, Chirlane and I had a powerful meeting at Gracie Mansion, and, again, made more powerful by the facts that Chirlane just acknowledged about its history. We sat with activists, leaders of the Black Lives Matter movement, families who had lost loved ones to police violence. And one of the things that they said would help immediately to move the city forward was to acknowledge the power of the phrase Black lives matter, and make it a part of the life of the city. So, we announced that we would start to, in streets all over the City, create murals that would send this message loud and clear – this was the view of New York City. And the images you see there from Bed-Stuy, Sunday – I was so honored to go and see the artists, the community members, all together, creating something new right there in the middle of Bed-Stuy that sends a message to New York City and the whole world. I want to thank and acknowledged Council Member Robert Cornegy, who helped to lead the way in creating this powerful mural. Being there was really, really moving. It felt like a moment where change was being declared and strengthened and energized, and we have more to do. So, we will now proceed to paint murals and locations around the five boroughs – Center Street, in Manhattan; Richmond Terrace, in Staten Island; Joralemon Street, in Brooklyn; 153rd Street in Queens; and Morris Avenue in the Bronx. They will all be completed over the next three weeks. And I ask all New Yorkers to recognize the power of this moment, that the City of New York is saying loudly, clearly, consistently – Black lives matter. And we will back up that belief with action, after action, after action, bring it to life and more and more ways in this city.

So, as Chirlane said, so much of the recognition that we are talking about today, so much of what we want to grapple with was made even clearer by the tragedy of the coronavirus, by the shocking, overt disparities, by the pain caused by this disease. We will never forget how discriminatory this disease has been and continues to be. We’re going to act every day to address that disparity. But one thing that everyone has a common interest in is defeating this disease once and for all so we can get on with the work of transformation and change. So, I’ll conclude today with what we do every day. And I’m happy to say, again, today, because of all the work that you all have done – every single New Yorker, acting as one family, one team – that today we have good news again. Indicator one, the daily number of people admitted to hospitals for suspected COVID-19 – the threshold is 200, and today it is 60 patients. Indicator two, the daily number of people in Health and Hospitals ICU’s – the threshold is 375 patients, and, today, there are 315. And the most important indicator – number three – percentage of people tested positive citywide for COVID-19 – the threshold is 15 percent, and, once again, today only two percent tested positive. And, again, a reminder, everyone, please, for the good of all of us, go get tested. It is easy, it is fast, it is free, and it will help us move forward as a city.

A few words in Spanish –

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

With that, we'll turn to our colleagues in the media and please let me know the name and outlet of each journalist.

Moderator: We'll now begin our Q&A. As a reminder, we're also joined by First Lady Chirlane McCray, and Deputy Mayor Phil Thompson. First question today goes to Juliet from 1010 WINS.

Question: Hi, good morning, Mr. Mayor, and everyone on the panel. How are you all?

Mayor: Good, Juliet. How are you?

Question: I'm fine, thank you. Yesterday the City Council, or, some members, called for the removal of the Jefferson statue from the Council Chamber. What are your thoughts on that [inaudible] a commission now, perhaps looking at that as well?

Mayor: Exactly right, Juliet. This is exactly the kind of thing that this new commission needs to examine. We've got to look at all of our history. To say the least, that's a huge undertaking and it will happen in stages, but I think it is the time to evaluate the entire look and feel of the city and a commission that's focused on justice and reconciliation can really think about a bigger approach to address our history in a constructive way. And I'm going to charge them with that task. Did you have a follow up Juliet?

Question: Yes, actually, I do have another question relating to reopening of the city. What are your plans for getting City workers back to work? Is there a process underway to review social distance procedures and offices or locations in the field? And when do you think that's going to happen?

Mayor: Yeah, that his work has been going on now for quite a while. Deputy Mayor for Operations, Laura Anglin, and others have been spearheading that effort. Look, Juliet, there's still a number of City workers who will be able to continue doing their work remotely for the time being, but there's others who now will be able to come back. We're putting in place a lot of the same precautions you're going to see in, in any and all offices and institutions, you know, social distancing, markers, checks to make sure that people are healthy before they come to work. Lots of specifics around cleanliness standards, all that is being put together. You will see more people coming back to work in phase two, those instructions are going to be sent out. But, again, for the foreseeable future, you'll also see a number of city workers continue to work remotely, obviously, including our educators.

Moderator: Next is Yoav from The City.

Question: Hi, everyone. Mr. Mayor, I wanted to ask – yesterday you were asked about the Council's chokehold bill, which you said you were going to sign. But I don't believe you were asked that, you know, one of your concerns was that it didn't contain an exception for where the officer's life might be in danger. As far as I understand, that provision was not included in the

bill. And so, given that, I'm wondering why you changed your mind and chose to support it anyway?

Mayor: Yeah. Yoav, I think, looking back, I now see that, honestly, the information I had at the time, I don't think was the whole truth. And this is a good time to reflect, for all of us, on what we got right, what we got wrong, what we understood, what we didn't understand. I now believe, based on consultation with some additional lawyers, that there are those protections embodied in State law, and that the chokehold bill the City Council has crafted will achieve the goal of making sure there are never chokeholds used against the people in New York City. But there will be appropriate ways in State law still to protect any officer who is doing the right thing, doing their job the way they're supposed to, and is fighting for their life, for example. I think the way I understood the situation previously just wasn't the whole picture. And I have to own up to that, that I had information – I thought I was working from the right information. I now believe I wasn't, honestly. So, now, I am really quite clear that this bill can achieve its purpose and is the right policy for the City of New York.

Question: Okay. Thank you. And I apologize, because I missed Juliet's second question – although I heard remote learning – the term – hopefully I'm not repeating her question. But I wanted to just ask if there's been any progress as far as determining what's going to happen with special education over the summer, as far as in-person versus remote learning.

Mayor: Yeah. Thank you, Yoav. That's a very important question. And again, for special-ED parents who have so many challenges they deal with every day, and, I think, very nobly. I understand that they really want to see in-person learning again. We are trying to figure out right now if there's a way to do that. We're not ready yet, that's the first thing I want to say to you. The Department of Education is examining all options right this moment and it's going to be interactive, obviously, with what we see with the disease, if we continue to make progress. Today, we do not have a new approach ready, but it's something I've asked the Chancellor to examine and come back quickly with an answer. If there are additional things we can do to help special-ED parents, I'd like us to decide that quickly, and get to work on it quickly.

Moderator: Next is Mark Morales from CNN.

Question: Hey, good morning everybody. How are you doing today?

Mayor: Hey Mark. How you doing?

Question: Good. Good. I had a couple of questions, but I wanted to ask one at a time if I could?

Mayor: Sure.

Question: The first is about the anti-crime team. I know a lot's been made of that in recent days, but a lot of folks that I've talked to said that that's one of the most proactive groups within the department and the loss of them [inaudible] but the loss of them could result in a lot more violence happening. A lot more guns off the street wouldn't be taken, a lot more of the proactive stuff that would happen. So I know that you've mentioned some measures that are going to be

taken in its place, but can you be a little bit more specific as to what's going to be done proactively by officers that would have been done by the anti-crime team now be done by other groups?

Mayor: Yeah, I'll say it broadly. Obviously Commissioner Shea can give you a much more detailed answer, but look as he and I discussed it in recent days, it is so consistent with everything that I have heard him say, going back to 2014 and everything that the COMSTAT approach has taught us. It is about brain power. It is about planning and strategy. It's about use of technology. There's so many ways to go at crime and particularly very organized crime, gang structures and other approaches, that is not just about the work that was historically done on the street by that unit, and that unit, as much as I believe, a lot of members of that unit were really trying to do something very, very important and very bravely – there was a real problem in many cases at the community level that it added to tensions with community members who had nothing to do with crime. It's not the same by any stretch as stop-and-frisk. But I think there is some resonance with the point that a strategy that, you know, had its roots in the notion of addressing crime turned into in some ways, something that was really counterproductive and Commissioner Shea believes, and I believe that the only way you make the city safe is by creating a very different relationship between police and community. We're talking about the justice that has to be different and new and the relationship between police and community. But also if we're going to stop crime, we have to change that relationship deeply. So Mark, I think the simple answer is these police officers will continue to fight crime. They'll use some different approaches and tools. But the Commissioner believes, and I believe that with those new approaches, they will be able to fight crime just as effectively, if not more effectively, and with more cooperation and partnership from the public. You have a follow-up?

Question: Yeah. Excuse me, about shootings. I know that shootings are or have been trending upward. What about, specifically about stopping those shootings and bringing them down to numbers that we've seen in the recent past?

Mayor: Yeah, just shooting issue is very real, and it worries me deeply. Mark, I've been watching the trend line over recent weeks. It's not good. I know Commissioner Shea, Chief Monahan, everyone is working on new strategies to address it. I think the restart of our entire criminal justice system will help everyone if courts begin again, and we go back to having appropriate prosecutions of gun violence so that I do think will organically change the situation. There's no question the NYPD will employ constantly changing strategies to address it as they have in past years, and I have great confidence they'll find a way, and we're going to put more and more resources into the Cure Violence movement and the Crisis Management System, which has proven to be extraordinarily effective in stopping gun violence before it happens and mediating conflicts. So we made a major investment a few days back into the Crisis Management System. We'll be doing a lot more of that going forward because I really think this is one of the most elemental ways we stop gun violence.

Moderator: Next is Henry from Bloomberg.

Question: Hello, Mr. Mayor, how are you doing today?

Mayor: I'm good. Henry. How are you?

Question: I'm good. I wanted to get back to this issue of Jefferson's statue. There's also a statue of George Washington in City Hall. First Lady mentioned Mr. Gracie being a slave holder. How are we going to get rid of the statue of George Washington in City Hall? Is that going to become an issue? Is there a question of whether we should change the name of Gracie Mansion? How far does this go?

Mayor: Henry had such a good question. I'll start, and then if Chirlane or Phil want to add they can jump in. Look, so I do think it's important to frame this, forgive me for being an amateur historian here, but, but Henry, I think it's important to frame this in the context of a revolutionary nation. The people who we have seen as heroes create a revolution against the colonial power, and when they achieve that revolution, I assure you, they changed many names, many symbols because they threw off the oak of tyranny and they started us on the pathway to where we are today. Because everyone involved is a human being, you're not going to be shocked to find out that many of them had profound contradictions, and I don't know how anyone can fight against the colonial power for freedom and own a slave at the same time. But I think the point is that in many nations, in many societies, people have had to re-examine their history and their symbols, and I think it's the right time for us to do it now. I don't have a foregone conclusion for you Henry, as to what names will be kept, what names will be changed when there will be context given to a name. But I think this commission is the right way to do it because for the first time, I mean, think about this. This is the first time any city or state in America will actually examine our truth. By having a Racial Justice and Reconciliation Commission, we are saying officially, we want the truth to come out in the open, and then we want to work structurally to address the falsehoods and the pain and the injustice. We know from other parts of the world that, that led to transformation. It's time for that to happen in America and let America's greatest city lead the way. Either one of you want to add?

Deputy Mayor Thompson: I would just say that I think this is a great topic for a conversation amongst people in the city on how best to represent our collective history, and my own view is that we can't wipe away how we got here, and that every step of the way has been through struggle with imperfections, with exclusions, and along the way, there have been people on both sides of every struggle, and part of what we have to do, I think is not just tear down statues, but construct new ones, and so there are many voices as the First Lady was saying earlier that we don't know because their names have been wiped out from history, and I think we have to bring them back. Kosciuszko. We have a bridge named after Kosciuszko, Kosciuszko came from Poland, not only fought for the American Revolution against the British, but also stood up and fought to end slavery. People need to know that about Kosciuszko. We need to have a statute for Kosciuszko. We need to diversify and bring to life our history, and I actually like in Washington DC, that there is a monument to Lincoln, there's a monument to George Washington and there's a monument to Martin Luther King because it shows that George Washington wasn't perfect, Abraham Lincoln wasn't perfect. Guess what? Martin Luther King wasn't perfect, and we are not perfect either. The struggle of democracy and really what makes it great is that we continue to get better. We learn from our mistakes and our weaknesses, and that's how we get stronger and more unified as a nation, and that's how we want to approach this.

Mayor: Okay. Alright. Good? Okay, Henry, I think you've got, you have a follow-up?

Question: Right, I appreciate the answer. Yes I do, and it goes back to a question I asked probably in early May and it's about, you know, when does the city feel that the risk of infection is low enough so that kids can shoot foul shots at a basketball court, can play softball, taking care to socially distance themselves, or wear a mask on the bench. There are so many ways in which people can accommodate themselves to the risk of infection while still engaging in team sports outdoors. I mean, isn't it a time to kind of reevaluate what the risks are of infection and conduct ourselves accordingly?

Mayor: It's a great question, Henry. So I will only give you a personal perspective to frame a, what I hope is a pretty consistent universal answer. So, Chirlane was involved in team sports when she was young, I was involved in every conceivable sport, never on any particularly high level. Our kids did organized team sports, baseball, softball, basketball, tennis, you name it. I believe the way to act on this, and it gets back to your question. The, when the first step, Monday, the playgrounds with the playground equipment for younger kids, I feel we're ready. We're going to watch in the next days, going into next week to see if the indicators start to move in any direction. We'll see the effects of Phase One, and that's really the big litmus tested Phase One. When hundreds of thousands of people came back into circulation, you've seen how much more traffic there is, how much more people on the subways, et cetera, did Phase One have a major impact. We'll know that going into next week, and that's going to tell us a lot. If we continue to make progress, as we get into Phase Two, then there'll be a day when we're ready to act on team sports activity. To me, it's all one big continuum. I actually don't see much difference, and this again is my experience a parent. I think if you let a lot of kids or bluntly, a lot of adults get together for sports, they are going to inherently start to get close together. I just don't believe you can properly create social distancing. I think it is much better to have a standard that when we believe people actually can be in closer proximity that's the time to act on all sports facilities together. Now that said, that does not mean give up on social distancing to give up on face coverings. It doesn't mean that at all. It means I take a very realistic position, Henry, that it is idealistic to say, oh, you know, you could, I love baseball. Baseball's my favorite sport, that you could have social distancing and baseball. Yeah, you could. But I can also tell you all the ways it would break down really, really quickly, especially with kids. So my view is let's get into Phase Two. Let's see how it's working. Let's see what we learned from Phase One at the right time. Then we can make a decision about all sports facilities in common.

Moderator: Next is Erin from Politico.

Question: Good morning, Mr. Mayor. question about the reopening. We don't have any public health people on today, do we?

Mayor: No, we don't. But tell us your question, if I can answer it—

Question: Yeah, I'll ask you and maybe I'll repeat it for them next week. I'm just wondering what your advice and your guidance is, as we go into Phase Two, we know, you know, what's going to be legal at this point. You can eat outdoors. You can have gatherings up to 10 people, but you know, for people who are concerned about staying safe, is it safe at this point to get

together with a few of your friends and go out and eat at an outdoor restaurant? Is that something you would advise people to do, or is it better to only be with your household members or still stay home as much as possible? What's the best practice as opposed to what is legally permissible?

Mayor: Thank you, Erin. I think there's two immediate answers I would offer. The first is this is a very personal decision that people need to make, and I'd say to anyone who feels cautious or uncomfortable, listen to that and less is more right? I mean, we are going through stages. We're feeling our way. I don't want to use the analogy of a minefield, but it might be an apt one. We are trying to find our way. We're trying to find a path that is stable and secure, and that does not allow this disease to reassert. Look, we all saw, and we talked about yesterday, the news from Beijing, which is obviously very troubling. So it's a reminder we've watched what's happening in a lots of states in this country. It's a reminder, this thing can come back.

So my first answer would be to the human level, if you're not comfortable, don't do anything you're not comfortable with, and if you think you're being asked to do something that is inappropriate in a workplace, for example, we need to hear about it right away. One of the things I want to emphasize is more and more workers come back. If they're not being provided PPEs by their employers, if they're not being given the opportunity to practice social distancing, they're being asked to do things that they think expose them. We need to know that so that we can stop it.

In terms of your question about dining out. Look, I think the standards and I've looked through the state standards, I would urge you to and everyone – they're very detailed and certainly make clear that there's a lot of precautions the restaurants need to take. The best group of people to be dining with is the people who live under the same roof with, because there you do not have to worry about additional exposure, but I would just say, if people are thinking about getting together with anyone they don't live under the same roof with, they need to really practice distancing, use the face coverage to the maximum, et cetera, be real cautious about it and we're going to know a lot more in a few weeks. So the other thing, last thing I'd say Erin is take it slow because we will know more in a few weeks as to what we're seeing with the result of Phase One and that's going to speak volumes.

Question: Am I back on?

Mayor: Yeah.

Question: I have a question on a different topic. The POST Act, you have said that you support that and you intend to sign it. The NYPD has publicly continued to take the opposite position saying that they oppose it, they think it's going to put officers in danger. Do you still intend sign it? Is that still your position? And what's your response to the fact that they're publicly taking the opposite position as you are?

Mayor: Look, sometimes we disagree and I've had this conversation in great detail with Commissioner Shea, Deputy Commissioner Miller. I have gone over the language in that bill, very carefully with the lawyers at City Hall. We are absolutely convinced that the legislation

leaves room for protecting the lives of our officers, which is absolutely sacred, for ensuring we can fight terrorism, for ensuring that we can fight gang violence. It's crucial to understand that the disclosure the bill calls for, I think is the right kind of broad disclosure of what kind of equipment is available, and what kind of checks and balances exist, what kind of controls to make sure that personal liberty is not invaded, et cetera.

But at the same time, I think it is clear in the legislation, it's certainly clear in state and federal law, and Erin, I want to hammer this point, this act does not exist in isolation. This is one of the things I've said very clearly to the Commissioner, this act exists in the context of state and federal law that clearly protects that which must be kept confidential in the name of saving lives, particularly from terrorism, and clearly respects the fact that anyone involved in public service, their life must be protected too. So I believe the intention of the law is right. We need absolutely to have transparency. It's how we build trust. It's how we make sure that every security force from the military on down, the CIA on down is doing what they're supposed to be doing. The public needs to know, but there are checks and balances that are needed to protect our officers and protect safety and security for everyone. I believe between what's in the legislation and what's in state and federal law that we have that balance and I will sign the legislation.

Moderator: Next is Matt Chayes from Newsday.

Question: Hey, good morning, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor: Good morning, how are you doing?

Question: I'm wondering thought when you saw plywood going up and now coming down? And is the city helping businesses remove plywood?

Mayor: Matt, that's something each business does on their own.

Question: Okay. And secondly, what concrete steps will we put in place, if any, in the next – same month to reduce the number of cyclists' deaths? And this isn't a question asking for a recitation of existing programs or panels that are going to propose something later, it's what you're doing over the next month?

Mayor: Matt, we are going to deepen always because that's the nature of Vision Zero. So I'll answer it the way I believe is the truth, Vision Zero continues to grow all the time. The formula is straightforward. As we can, especially as more and more work is coming back, continue the work on the physical reality of the streets, more enforcement, which I think is crucial, more of the camera's coming into play. That's what works and that's what we'll do.

Moderator: The next is Julia from The Post – and I'm sorry, we have time for two more today.

Question: Hey, good morning, Mr. Mayor. On the Juneteenth holiday, is that something that you can do on your own executive order? And if so why not, you know, instate it this week to mark, you know, what you said was a historical and transformational moment in our history?

Mayor: I'm sorry, Julia, I didn't understand – the first part I heard, can you do it by executive order, what was that follow through on that?

Question: If you could, why not do it this week to mark, you know, what you've said is a historic and transformational moment in our history?

Mayor: Okay, to the first question. Yes. I can do it by executive order and I'll be doing that later on today. The second question, because this involves a huge workforce and something like this has to be done through labor negotiation. So we'll start that right away and obviously it's a lot of work to get ready for something like this and we'll implement it for next year. You have a follow-up?

Question: Yeah, I do. Thank you very much. The follow-up is there's another area of apparent daylight between you and Police Commissioner and that's on NYPD in schools. Commissioner Shea told the Associated Press that he would consider taking cops out of schools. You had said that you thought they should stay. Can you explain that difference?

Mayor: Yeah, sure. I've talked to the Commissioner about it, Julia. He understands and to his great credit that in a democracy that decisions are made by the civilians and the fact is there's a conversation going on right now. And I appreciate that there are some who think school safety should be taken out of NYPD. I don't think they're right. I'm going to have that conversation with everyone. I'm open. I'm not dogmatic, but I do believe in my heart, parents are very worried about the safety of the kids. Profoundly concerned about the safety of their kids. I went to more town hall meetings and I can count Julia where parents were raising the fact that they wanted more to be done for safety for their children. Not less. They're worried about school shootings. They're worried about weapons in schools. This is – these are longstanding problems in this city.

So I want this whole conversation to start from the grassroots up. What do the parents of New York City want and need here? And how do we do things in a way that's all about reform and transformation? It's a conversation we're absolutely going to have with the City Council, but I'll tell you that my first impulse is that school safety actually has consistently made our schools safer. They've taken a lot of weapons out of our schools. They've reduced crime and violence steadily over the years, but school safety needs to evolve rapidly towards the directions that this administration has put in place. Restorative justice, social, emotional learning, neighborhood policing, all of that needs to be brought in more deeply into school safety. So I think that's the best way forward. I think the Commissioner is respecting the fact that this is ultimately a decision that will be made at City Hall. But I believe we've got to remember, the first question is the safety of our kids and everyone that works in our schools, our educators, and all the schools staff and the record of school safety and achieving that has been really pretty extraordinary in recent years.

Moderator: Last question for today goes to a Reuven from Hamodia.

Question: Good morning, Mr. Mayor in discussing police budget cuts with New Yorkers, what I've been hearing is that people will love cutting the traffic enforcement agents whose main job is giving parking tickets. And by the way, they'd also love getting rid of alternate side, as well as

the undercover officers whose sole job seems to be giving moving violations. Might those be included in your police funding cuts?

Mayor: So wait, I want to – I heard – your voice was a little low there, Reuven. I heard traffic enforcement just say it again?

Question: They want to get rid of the traffic enforcement agents and the undercover officers whose sole job is giving moving violations. The the ones in the cop cars without the lights.

Mayor: Yeah, I think Reuven, I appreciate the question, but I think there's a misnomer here that also needs to be addressed. Moving elements out of the NYPD into another city agency means they will continue to do their work. So we've actually got two or three different things happening here. Some people are proposing taking some units out of the NYPD, putting them in another agency, funding them exactly the same way, having them do exact same work. That may have merit, but I don't want it to be misconstrued. There are some things I think can be done better by civilians than by NYPD, and some things done better by NYPD than civilians. We've got to work out which is which, but that doesn't implicitly mean a budget savings. Then you have changes within the NYPD like the decision to no longer constitute the anti-crime unit the same way. I think the Commissioner is absolutely right. We have to fight crime in a different fashion and continue to improve the relationship between police and community, and that unit didn't fit the mission of 2020 and beyond. He's taking a futuristic view and saying, we need to do something very different to achieve higher goals. So there's different kinds of approaches here and then some, of course, beyond that. The third point, some are just calling for a pure budget reduction to the NYPD. So when you say something like traffic enforcement or anti-crime, that work has to happen, it's going to happen with the same people in different ways potentially, but it has to happen. So I don't want there to be a misunderstanding about that. I think the anti-crime point, picking up on what you said Reuven is, are there some things that the same people might do it, the same mission has to be done, but they might do it a different way. Yeah, we have to look at all of that. What's your follow-up?

Question: Yeah. Sorry, I didn't – I don't believe I said anti-crime. What I discussed was the ones who give the moving violations, but I wanted it - so I wanted to ask about the alternate side. There was a lot of discussion that alternate side has canceled for weeks, and many people seem not to miss it. Might we get rid of it permanently or maybe go down from once a week to once a month?

Mayor: I think that was one of the great understatements I've heard in a long time. Many people seemed not to miss it. I think you know, alternate side parking is like right up there with Satan and most people's views, so it's and unfortunately it is a necessary evil of ever there's been one. And I'm saying as someone who many, many a time had to move my car and hated doing it and sometimes forgot to do it and got the ticket and everything else, Reuven the answer here is, alternate side exists for cleanliness, and we certainly need to balance, you know, how often do you need some cleaning to keep the neighborhood to the standard that we'd like for all of our neighborhoods. But in this crisis, we've found that we could do with a lot less use of alternative side in part, a lot of few where people are out, we're going to evaluate it. I don't see a scenario where it doesn't exist because I think you would find there are many, many problems would

come up. New problems would come up if it didn't exist, but can it be on a new timeline? I think that's a very real question. For one thing, I think there shouldn't be any block in New York City where it's more than once a week you have to move your car, and that's something I have raised before, and I want to say to Deputy Mayor Anglin and Commissioner Trottenberg who know how I feel about this, that we should double down on the work of ensuring that, you know, the most someone has to move their cars is once a week. But I do think Reuven it's a real issue of whether we can do it less frequently than we've been doing it. I think it would be a blessing if we can find a way to do that, but more, more to come on that.

So I go from a rather mundane issue, alternate side parking, to an extraordinarily profound issue, as I conclude, and again, the meaning Juneteenth. You know, again, I come back to this point, here is a holiday known and felt deeply by people of African descent all over this country, not everyone, but a lot of people. And then almost unknown to a huge percentage of white Americans. It's an obvious metaphor for the whole reality how people have lived lives apart and how, and understanding of our common truth has really never come. I have had a personal journey coming to understand this more and more, and I'm still working on it. But I can tell you just in the context of the life I've led out in communities in this city, working for the first African American Mayor of New York City, having the joy and the privilege to be married to our First Lady and to become a part of her family. I've learned incessantly we as white Americans don't know a lot of things that we need to know and Juneteenth, let it be a beginning for all of us who don't know enough of a new recognition. And every one of us doesn't matter what race you are, what ethnicity you are. Every one of us needs to understand this history better, but I would say that today's announcement, the holiday is the beginning, but the idea of a commission on racial justice and reconciliation, once and for all coming to grips with the truth of New York City history, and then doing something about it, that's actually how we honor all those came before us and that's the way we make New York City worthy of the greatness that the world sees in us. Thank you, everybody.

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