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**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO DELIVERS REMARKS AT THE GREEK  
INDEPENDENCE DAY RECEPTION AT GRACIE MANSION**

**Mayor Bill de Blasio:** Isn't it an extraordinary honor to have the Archbishop with us? Let's thank him for all he does.

[Applause]

I don't know about you but I could listen to Archbishop Demetrios all day long because he is –

[Laughter]

I love his voice. I love the passion with which he speaks. I love how intelligent, how learned he is. And when he talks about the history, you feel like you're there. And Archbishop, thank you for reminding everyone of the power of this history.

We are gathered here today because of patriots who took on, as you said, what appeared to be an impossible battle for their freedom, for the respect of their people. We learn time and time again in history – and this man is also a great historian, I know – history teaches us that we have to recognize our own power, our own ability to change the circumstance we live in.

Those patriots understood it then and created the Greek nation we know today. And we celebrate it so grandly here in New York City and all over the world. The parade and the festivities and the people who gather, everyone here included, are people who have achieved so much, accomplished so much, given back so much to this city and this country.

But all of that would have been impossible had not those underdogs stood up and fought against a great empire, against what appeared to be insurmountable odds. Everyone has benefitted in this room from the actions of those patriots almost two centuries ago and it should put in perspective to us what today seems commonplace once upon a time seemed almost impossible.

It should encourage us to believe in the difference that we can make in our own time in the name, as the Archbishop said, in the name of freedom, freedom of faith, freedom of expression, freedom for people all over the world.

And no place epitomizes that better than New York City. If I may say, I know you have a very large purview, Archbishop, and you represent people in so many parts of this nation and beyond, but I have to say I think our city, we should be proud of the ideal that is lived out here every day. That people can live in freedom and dignity, people of all backgrounds can practice their faith openly and freely. All opinions are respected.

Let me be clear, New Yorkers have very strong opinions.

[Laughter]

So, you may get something back if you say it but – but the assumption in this great place is that we live and let live. And it's pretty amazing.

I love to talk to about New York City through the example of a typical subway car. I was on the subway earlier today. When you look around the subway car, you see every kind of person, people of all faiths, all backgrounds, from all nations, people whose families have been here for ten generations, and people who just got here, all together.

And it may not be exactly perfect harmony but it is a kind of harmony that's very powerful because people manage to get along. That's our great gift to the world.

Now, we are here to celebrate the greatness of the Greek people and I want to thank you. I'm going to thank you on behalf of all 8.5 million New Yorkers. I want to offer my personal thanks to the Greek people.

I want to thank you for a few very specific things. I want to thank you for democracy. That was really –

[Laughter]

Really helpful. Thank you.

[Laughter]

Really, we couldn't do it without you.

[Laughter]

I want to thank you for helping us think by having established the notion of philosophy. Thank you. Philosophy – it's a great thing.

For those of us who like to entertained and enlightened, thank you for the concept of drama.

[Laughter]

Everything I'm naming here, as you can imagine, is fundamental to our society. All of it began in Greece. Why don't you give yourselves a round of applause?

[Applause]

Before I turn to our special guest, I want to thank all the people in this room who are part of our administration who do so much to help this city. I want you to first applaud all of them for their public service. Thank you to all the members of the administration.

[Applause]

A very special thank you to one member of the administration in particular and she is extraordinarily proud of her Greek heritage. It's something she thinks about a lot, she cares about a lot. And she has continued to be elevated in this administration which proves the Greeks always get ahead in the end because they work so hard.

[Laughter]

They work so hard, right, right?

So I wanted to give a special acknowledgment to my Chief of Staff, Emma Wolfe. Emma, you have to come out here for a moment.

[Applause]

Come on. She's out there. Where are you? She's hiding somewhere. Alright, I'm calling her out for a great moment and – there you go. There you go. Way into the crowd, there.

[Applause]

If anyone says the Greeks don't have enough power, you already have the Chief of Staff. You've done very well.

I want to thank the international dignitaries who are present who grace us as part of this ceremony today. And a special thank you to someone who has done so much for this community in this city as the President of the Federation of Hellenic Societies, Petros Galatoulas.

[Applause]

Thank you.

**Unknown:** [Inaudible]

**Mayor:** Okay.

[Laughter]

Whatever he said, I agree.

[Laughter]

Now, when we gather each year we have an opportunity to honor someone special who epitomizes the accomplishments of the community. And every community is made up of people who work hard, who do great things through their businesses, through the arts, through so many – government, so many parts of our society.

Every community has everyday heroes and every community has some famous names as well. And this is someone who represents one of the great names in the Greek-American experience. She is known for so many things – for being an actress of great acclaim, for being someone who has advocated on behalf of women and the environment. She was also a delegate to the 1988 Democratic Convention which nominated her cousin to be President of the United States. And she won the highest honor that is given in her chosen profession when she won an Oscar from the Academy for the movie, Moonstruck.

We are so honored to have with us here at Gracie Mansion one of the great cultural figures in the Greek-American experience – ladies and gentlemen, I introduce to you, Olympia Dukakis.

[Applause]

[...]

This proclamation – I was supposed to give it to you before you spoke. It got everything mixed up. That's okay, it still works –

**Olympia Dukakis:** It didn't look that way.

**Mayor:** It looks good.

[Laughter]

This proclamation speaks about your extraordinary achievements and what you mean to this community. But the best part is at the very end. I'm going to read the last sentence. It says, "Now therefore I, Bill de Blasio Mayor of the City of New York, do hereby proclaim Tuesday, March 20th, 2018 in the City of New York as Olympia Dukakis Day."

[Applause]

**Dukakis:** Where do you think that picture's going?

[Laughter]

Thank you very much.

[Applause]

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