

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

**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO APPEARS LIVE ON HOT 97'S EBRO IN THE MORNING**

**Ebro Darden:** Matter of fact, back – speaker back, back on the program, Mayor de Blasio, give it up one time, on Ebro in the Morning.

[Applause]

Beautiful Laura Stylez, Rosenberg. Mayor de Blasio, good morning.

**Mayor Bill de Blasio:** Good morning, good morning. How you doing?

**Darden:** Listen, we are doing our best to balance some music with a couple of couple of laughs while also delivering, you know, the bad news, the bad numbers, you know, the death toll. So, you know, it's tough. How are you holding up?

**Mayor:** I'm hanging in and I think, Ebro, as usual you are hitting something important here. This is – look, it's not hopeless. We got to be real about this and we got to be, you know, positive any way we can be. It's not hopeless. It is – something that's going to be really, really tough for the next month or two, then we will start to come out of it. And, you know, the vast, vast majority of people, even who get this disease are going to come through. It's incredibly painful. It's confusing. It creates tremendous fear and anxiety. Obviously, you know, hundreds and thousands of people out of work in New York City and it's horrible things happening. But we are going to come up through the other side unlike, you know, some other challenges that people have faced over the years where you don't know where the end is. We know that this has an end point. We don't know exactly where it is, but it's somewhere in the next few months and we got to keep that in mind even while we're fighting this very difficult fight

**Darden:** In your experience in working as a politician, right, you know, obviously, a much more sophisticated – where oftentimes I feel like opening up the mic and saying, hey guys, it's bad right now. I don't even feel like delivering hope because right now we are in the thick of it. And I felt like that yesterday, not so much this morning, but most of it came from my anticipation of what we are going to see this weekend. This weekend we're going to see death toll numbers and case – I mean the case numbers, like you said, most people are going to get to the other side. The real heavy number is that death toll number.

**Mayor:** It is, it is. And no one should stop feeling that, right? I think the worst of all worlds, we become numb to it. But I also think we have to understand, there's these incredibly heroic efforts

happening out there in our hospitals. All of these folks who are showing up to fight this and, you know, going through hell, but they're going to do it because it's what they believe in to save lives. And, you know, all the other people that first responders and the people – like in Brooklyn yesterday I was out in this – it's like unbelievable to see. And I want to tell your listeners to check out something that we've put up on my Twitter account @NYCMayor. It's a video of this building in the Brooklyn Navy Yard that a few days ago, it was not a factory.

And over the last few days, they've turned it into a factory from scratch out of nowhere to produce these face masks that protect health care workers, protect first responders. And this literally – you go into this room, Ebro, and there's hundreds of people and they're doing it all by hand. No machinery, it's human beings taking sheets of plastic and taking elastic and assembling by hand these face masks that then we'll go right to our health care workers, our first responders, that will literally save them from getting anything on them that might endanger them. These folks are going to have 120,000 masks by next week. Every single one's made by hand. But you look at it – and when we say this was kind of like a war atmosphere, this is something that wasn't made in New York City, that now people are just taken upon themselves to go and create to protect other people. And it's just a beautiful thing. So, even with this pain, New Yorkers are stepping up in ways that are, like, unimaginable.

**Laura Stylez:** Mayor de Blasio, I also saw that you tweeted that you spoke with Elon Musk and he's donated hundreds of ventilators to New York City.

**Mayor:** It's amazing. Laura. I mean out of nowhere – I've never met Elon Musk – I talked to him at length last night and he just said, 'I care about New York City, I feel for what you guys are going through. And I just went and found ventilators,' and he says he's going to get us more. And I mean he just took the initiative and he did it, and that's beautiful and it's going to save lives. I think people hear ventilator, Laura, and it's kind of like, well what does that mean? I talked to some of our doctors at Kings County Hospital in Brooklyn and they're like, here's what it means – if a patient is struggling to breathe, if they can get on that ventilator exactly when they need it, a lot of them are going to pull through, ultimately. They'll survive after a tough battle. But we cannot – if a doctor cannot get that ventilator in a matter of minutes to that patient who really needs it. That patient literally suffocates.

**Darden:** And not only that, but when oxygen stops getting into the blood and doesn't get to the organs, organs start to shut down.

**Stylez:** Absolutely –

**Mayor:** Correct. Correct. So, people need to understand, they hear a word like ventilators, it's literally the difference between life and death and it's one per person. We're trying, in some cases, to be able to get two patients on the same one if their condition is similar enough. But the notion – like we're having this whole discussion this morning you know, some people are questioning, the president's even questioning how many ventilators New York needs. Look at these case numbers and understand that when a patient needs to be on a ventilator, they need to be on it as long as it takes to save them.

**Darden:** Right.

**Mayor:** That could be hours, that could be days, but it's not optional. And it's not like you can say, 'oh, geez, sorry, we didn't happen to have our quota, you know, you're just going to have to wait'. You can't wait.

**Darden:** Preparedness is clearly not – I mean there's a laundry list of things that are not his strong suit, but being prepared is not of them that Donald Trump has exhibited at any point that I can ever remember, even before he was a president. He's been a moron and now he's the president and he's still a moron because basically the Governor, Cuomo, and as well as yourself, De Blasio, are trying to get out ahead of the problem. Not wait until it's a problem, which is why we are in the predicament we are right now unprepared, is because Donald Trump removed the office in the White House that would have had us prepared for this.

**Mayor:** Yeah. You know, we went through Ebola. [Inaudible] that office was set up by President Obama, was because of Ebola.

**Darden:** That's right.

**Mayor:** And I remember one night I was at Bellevue Hospital. The folks at Bellevue, all the people in the public hospitals just, they were amazing. Then Ebola is like – you know, Ebola, you got exposed to it, it's likely [inaudible] for you. Right. I mean that was really a devastating, devastating disease. And the folks at Bellevue were just warriors, the way they handle that. And I was at Bellevue one night, right in the middle of that, and President Obama called and said, look, you know New York is showing the nation the right way to do this and we want to support you in every way we can. And he watched that experience with Ebola and he set up this office because he knew more of this stuff would be happening, and somehow the Trump administration shut it down probably because you know they associated it with Obama. It was like knee-jerk.

**Darden:** Right.

**Mayor:** But the problem is, you know, now we're caught as a nation flat-footed and then – okay that happens sometimes in life, but then the way you react to that is to say, okay, we're going to throw in all we got – and I had been pleading with the president, I've talked to the president a number of times. I've said it to him personally. I've said publicly, I've talked to the Secretary of Defense, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. This is the only way we can turn this around is to get the military in, and that is to say that the military – first of all, they have a huge number of their own medical personnel who are used to going into combat situations. They can handle this. They're used to dropping down somewhere and handling whatever the hell they have to deal with.

We need that level of medical personnel to help our front line health workers who are straining right now. Also, if you want to move a lot of stuff from one place to another, the only organization in America that can do it as quickly as we need it, is the military. I think, you know – every, every military person I've talked to has a can-do attitude about whatever it's going to

take. They are looking at this like they would a war. It's just the enemy happens to be an invisible virus, but it's no different than if it were an invading army.

**Peter Rosenberg:** So what's the resistance to it – to doing it then?

**Mayor:** This is a case where the president, I'm trying to work him. I'm really trying to work with them on behalf of New York City, but I've also got to be honest. He's got to be the commander in chief and say, 'I'm mobilizing the military to deal with this', not only in New York, they're going to need it in other places as well. And it's just, give the order – and guess what, yes, it's going to cost a lot of money. Just like apparently he's hesitating on the money to build more ventilators. You know what? You're going to want those. You're going to need those ventilators really soon all over the country simultaneously. You better be damn well building them now. So I don't understand why he hesitates to use the power he has because he's now saying, 'maybe it'll be over by Easter and we'd all get back to normal'. We're not getting back to normal. It's getting worse all over the country. There's a new problem in Chicago. There's a new problem in New Orleans. It's spreading and we are definitely going to have a very tough April and I'm trying to warn people it could stretch well into May.

**Rosenberg:** The mayor of Los Angeles already basically told the population of L. A., I read yesterday that the plan that they're looking for at – the light at the end of the tunnel is definitely May.

**Mayor:** Yeah, look, and I want to be careful even when we say, light at the end of the tunnel. I think this is a disease that has a season, just like we think about flu or whatever. As best I understand from our health care leaders here in New York City, it does not, like, just go on forever in the same way. There's sort of a peak and then it starts to come down. But in terms of a huge number of cases and the strain on our medical system and the life and death struggle to protect people, right now from everything I can see that is all April and a lot of May, if not all of May. And then in June and July you start to normalize. But it's not one of these snap your fingers things. Because, you know, I've been honest and this is what a lot of the projections are showing now.

We got to expect half of New Yorkers, or more, will be infected over time. And that doesn't mean everyone panic. Because we know, for the vast majority of people, 80 percent, consistently, you get no worse impact than if you had like a typical flu or cold kind of thing, and seven or 10 days, something like that, you're out and you come back and you're done. So that's what most people are going to go through. It's really important for folks to realize that there's a bunch of people that won't be infected. There's a bunch of people being affected and it will be pretty mild. And then there's about 20 percent of the ones who are affected, who rightly are going to be going through – when I say right, I mean that the truth is – they're going to go through a real struggle.

A lot of them are going to end up hospitalized. But a lot of them, the vast majority of them can pull through. If we have the doctors, the nurses, the ventilators, when we need them, we get them to safety in the end. But you know, we just have to say, it's not fast. I'd love it to be fast. It's just – anyone who tells you this is going to be over quickly, that's not the reality. And we got to be

honest. People can deal with reality a lot better [inaudible] told one thing and then turns out to be a lie.

**Rosenberg:** What's our – what would you say, Mayor, is the number one problem we're facing right now as a city? The absolute thing you have to get fixed immediately. What would that be?

**Mayor:** I think at this hour it would be ventilators first and doctors and nurses second, that we've got to – there's a point at which if you don't have that ventilator it's ballgame over. And we do not have enough supply to get us forward well into April. We can get through next week, but I'm not sure about after next week because I don't know how many cases we're going to have and if we're going to stay on this trajectory or not.

So I need to get every ventilator we can get our hands on. What Elon Musk did is helping a lot and we're just going to have to do a lot more like that. When we get to that point, we say, okay, we know we have enough ventilators. That's going to be a crucial moment for the city. Then the second biggest problem is enough doctors and nurses where we need them in time, remembering that some of them will get sick and we'll have to give them the time to get well. A lot of them are really tired right now and hurting from what they've seen. It's very painful what they're going through. They'll need to be relieved and given time down so they can get their energy back. So getting those folks mobilized – all the folks, you know, the doctors and nurses in private practice, and I think this is the point about the military. There's thousands and thousands of military medical personnel and we need them here now.

**Darden:** Now the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers that has set up, I believe, at Jacob Javits, is the only location that's been turned into a hospital so far.

**Mayor:** Jacob Javits Center, which is huge, obviously is being turned into a huge medical facility. And what that's going to allow is that for the hospitals, the big hospitals themselves, will increasingly be ICUs. They won't be like a normal hospital. It'll be like all ICU or primarily ICUs – intensive care units – and then the folks who don't need intensive care whether it's for coronavirus or anything else, can go to these other types of facilities. Like Javits, it's going to be huge, it's going to mean thousands of beds. So, that's really, really important. But we have to keep doing a lot of that.

**Darden:** Well, and then you have a – I read this morning that there's that the Navy medical ship, the USNS Comfort, I believe, is pulling up in the New York Harbor. They've got a staff and they've – is that also true?

**Mayor:** Yes. And that's – I talked to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff a couple of times and this is a really big deal. They're sending – the United States has two of these. These ships are like huge hospitals, like thousand-bed hospitals that come with everything. The equipment, the doctors and nurses, everything – and just pulls up. I mean imagine, the ship pulls up to a pier in Manhattan and suddenly becomes one of the biggest hospitals in New York City.

**Darden:** And that supposed to happen next week, correct?

**Mayor:** Next week – it's amazing.

**Darden:** Is that some of the military stuff that you're speaking of that we need, like some of it is coming, but you're saying there needs to be more.

**Mayor:** A whole lot more because that piece is going to be crucial and I'm very thankful. Again, you know Ebro I'm trying to be real about – when the federal government does something right, I'm going to be truly thankful because we need it. But the whole question is just the size of this challenge and the mission ahead for all of us. So, you know, right now you just think about all military bases in America. Think about all the military personnel and all of the medical personnel and how many of them could be here soon, helping to fill the gaps, and fight this battle, which will only go on for weeks. And that's the other thing to remember, when it starts to subside here, then the notion would be, take those [inaudible] personnel, send them to where the next biggest problem is. Take those ventilators, send them ahead to another part of the country that needs them because we're going to have to do that for months and months to stay ahead of it. And I think the military folks actually get it. They're thinking about it as if they have to fight a war. They're thinking about where would you send your troops, where would you send your medical folks, where would you send your equipment? That's what we need right now because this thing's just going to – it's going to jump up and we have to be honest about it.

**Darden:** And are you pleased? How would you grade, at least, the population of New York City on following directions, social distancing, and staying out of the way?

**Mayor:** I think – first of all, I'm very proud of what New Yorkers have done because I want to make real and human – a month ago, our lives were normal and –

**Rosenberg:** Well we talked for – let's be honest, we talked for a long time. It might've been time.

**Darden:** I wanted that last one, man. I wanted, I needed the grade because you know you still got people hanging outside.

**Stylez:** Yes.

**Rosenberg:** [Inaudible]

**Darden:** There's still people this weekend, the weather may be nice a little bit today, and you got people congregating in the park. I saw two dudes the other day walking down the street, sharing a blunt.

**Rosenberg:** Come on, fam

**Stylez:** They started removing the hoops from certain parks.

**Rosenberg:** No blunt sharing, 2020.

**Darden:** But you know what? Basketball hoops, that's all black neighborhoods generally. That's to stop people from playing basketball in the hood, which I get. But you know.

**Rosenberg:** Well there are there more basketball courts in the hood to start out with? Probably. Mayor de Blasio.

**Mayor:** Hey, can you hear me?

**Darden:** Yeah, we got you. Your phone shut off on us.

**Mayor:** Yeah. I don't know what happened, but listen, my point is we are so used to that super social, super close lifestyle. And then over the last few weeks we've told people, unless it's someone you live under the same roof, you have to stay six feet apart from everyone. That's a massive, massive change. And actually what we found, Ebro, is the vast majority of people are abiding by – well, you know, we have police and parks department folks and everyone out in parks and generally people are, they're doing it to the best of their ability. They are taking instruction, they're following through and we got to do more because I've heard about supermarkets will get too crowded. And that's up to the folks who work in those stores, but also the shoppers to realize if it's super crowded, stand back, you know, wait until it's less crowded. You've got to keep that six-foot distance. If you're in a line – everyone, look, we all got to take some responsibility here. If you're in a line, you got to tell everyone, everyone spread it out, six feet between each person on either side. But if you said for a grade, I mean I got to say it's amazing. I think the vast majority of New Yorkers have adapted really quickly and they take it really, really seriously.

**Rosenberg:** What are we going to about these parks though, Mayor? Because I was at Riverside Park last weekend and people were out there – yes, they may have been doing their best to be six feet apart, but we can't have people hanging out at the park, like it's just – you know, let's spend Saturday at the park. It was a bit crowded.

**Mayor:** That's over and last weekend was a transitional weekend. You remember it was Sunday night that the new rules went into effect all over the state and we're making a decision, for example, on Saturday night, tomorrow night, on whether to keep playgrounds open and –

**Darden:** Most people want you to close it. Right. That's the vibe you're getting?

**Mayor:** No, I think it's a real mixed situation. I think there's a lot of parks of the city where the playground is one of the only recreational spaces, particularly for parents with young kids. And remember a family – if you're a parent with a young child or two parents with two children, whatever, you live under the same roof, you don't have to socially distance. You're already next to each other all the time.

**Darden:** [Inaudible] –

**Stylez:** Yeah. What about people on these jungle gyms? Nobody's disinfecting that. Kids are spreading germs to other kids. They bring it back to their families.

**Mayor:** Right. But the point is, I don't belittle that and the – no one is disinfecting it, nor have we ever in the history of New York City. The point is, if a parent wants to go out, just have their kid run around, it's that parent's choice if they want their child to go on any equipment at all. But my concern here is, we have been shutting off in a matter of days. First of all, schools were gone. Then recreation centers were gone, afterschool programs, youth leagues, basketball. You know, we're telling people, we're telling kids they cannot do team sports of any kind, even informally.

I'm just trying to help people go through the stages here. So tomorrow night if we – you know, we've had the NYPD and Parks Department looking at these playgrounds, seeing what's happening. If we think people are abiding by the rules, we'll leave them open. If we think different, we'll shut them down. We've already had to shut down a bunch of basketball courts because there've been multiple warnings saying you cannot play the game of basketball anymore. It just doesn't work. And folks have not been abiding, so we're just taking out the rims and just making it impossible. And if we've got to do a lot more of that, we'll do a lot more of that. But there's a fine line because people still need – you're right, don't hang out all day.

**Darden:** You can't play defense and social distance.

**Rosenberg:** Nope.

**Darden:** It's not – you're not playing defense. At that point, why are you even playing basketball?

**Mayor:** Correct. And, but also if you say to the people of this city, you can't even go out and get any exercise or fresh air, that I think is just unrealistic and unfair. So we want people to go out, get your exercise, half-hour or whatever it is, get back home. We'll try and leave spaces open for that. We'll try and make sure people follow those rules – and it's a tough, tough adjustment. But overall I think people have done pretty damn well with it. This weekend, will really be telling. It's starting to get nicer out. If folks are all being business as usual and hanging out, then we're going to have to be tougher and tougher and, you know, close off more options if people are not getting the memo.

**Darden:** Now are you getting pushback where people really just want you to shut the whole city down? Because I am seeing that written as well where people are like, look, Mayor, just shut everything down, tell everybody to stay in the house, it is what it is, and people will have to suck it up.

**Mayor:** The reality of this crisis just amplifies everyday life in the city in the sense of there's strong views on all sides, right. We're the most highly opinionated city on Earth. There's a bunch of people who want to be able to get outside, who want to be able to exercise, and are doing it responsibly. They still have to – you know, even in the places that had the toughest lockdowns, you still have to let people go out to get groceries and medicine. So there's not like – I don't want anyone to have the illusion there's a place in the world, I don't know of one that's like, you stay inside, you're locked in your apartment, and somehow, food and medicine arrives on your doorstep. Like that's not happening anywhere to the best of my understanding on a mass level.



So I think we have to acknowledge that people are going to have to get out at least some. It's about people taking responsibility and us enforcing as a city and taking it real seriously. We could get a little tougher, obviously, like we could shut down playgrounds. We could really put additional limits on some other things, but there's a certain point past which you cannot go because people have to get food and medicine under any scenario.

**Darden:** And you can't make it a – you can't enact some sort of legal ramification for people having to get necessities?

**Mayor:** There's no way I know with 8.6 million people, with this time frame we're talking about, which is really the next six to eight weeks to, you know, deliver everything that everyone needs, and when they need it. I don't think that's – that wouldn't be honest to say that we have the ability to do that. No one's ever tried to do it. We couldn't do it on this time frame. We are going to be doing a lot more food programs because a lot of people are struggling without pay and can't afford food. So we'll make more food available out there. But we can't, like, deliver to every human being effectively. So I think what we can – what you will see though is, you know, there are some areas that if we have to be even tougher, we can do that. But again, there's a certain limit.

There's a point at which people have to understand this is personal. If you don't want to get this disease, then you know, do unto others. Practice this social distancing for your own good and everyone else's. And if you've got anything in your life who's sick, if they're older, that they need help, we want to make sure we get the oldest folks and the folks with pre-existing conditions the help they need immediately. If someone's older, like over 70 and they are not sick, don't let them out. They should literally avoid social contact. If they want to see their grandchildren or something, don't do it. This is not the time for that. You know, we're talking about very limited time here. We have to be really careful around our oldest family members and anybody who is just, you know, sick but not going through something particularly awful, just feels like what you go through with a cold, fluid – stay home, don't go near other people. Let it go for three or four days. If you're feeling better, great. If you're not feeling better, call your doctor. But if you are sick, don't go near other people. That's a real simple rule.

**Darden:** And as we've been saying, if you don't feel like you would have went to the hospital before, don't just show up to a hospital now trying to get a test.

**Mayor:** Correct.

**Darden:** Call your physician, tell them your symptoms, don't just show up waiting around a bunch of other people either.

**Mayor:** It only makes it worse and, Ebro, that's such an important point. You know, what people have to understand, again, there's going to be millions of New Yorkers, based on what we know now, who are never going to contract the disease. And then there's going to be millions of New Yorkers who contract it and come through fine because it's going to feel just like essentially what you go through with, you know, having a flu. For healthier folks – if you're under 50 and you

don't have any of those pre-existing conditions, that means lung disease, heart disease, cancer, serious diabetes or a compromised immune system. If you don't have one of those things and you're under 50, overwhelmingly, the likelihood is you're going to experience this like people do, you know, just in normal flu season. And that's why we're saying give it those three or four days, see what it does, and if it just seems to be like one of those regular diseases you're used to, and it starts to ease, you don't need to go anywhere, you just need to ride it out. But if after four days you're actually getting worse, that's when you call your doctor, then your doctor decides, is it time for a test, is it time to get to a hospital. But first people have to just sort of give it a chance to see what's going on, particularly if you're in that huge category of people who are under 50 and basically healthy.

**Darden:** Mayor Bill de Blasio, thank you for your time. I am positive we will be checking in with you in the coming days and weeks, as we ride out this terrible moment in history.

**Mayor:** We will ride it out and I really appreciate you guys getting people honest information because everyone depends on you. I know your listeners really depend on you and trust you. And so spreading the truth is more important at this time, even than it is in normal times.

**Darden:** It is. Mayor Bill de Blasio. Thank you for your time today.

**Rosenberg:** Thanks, Mayor.

**Stylez:** Thank you.

**Mayor:** Thank you. Take care guys.

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