



THE CITY OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
NEW YORK, NY 10007

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CONTACT: pressoffice@cityhall.nyc.gov, (212) 788-2958

**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO DELIVERS REMARKS AT THE CENTER FOR
AMERICAN PROGRESS' 2018 IDEAS CONFERENCE**

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Well, hello progressives.

[Applause]

There is nothing better than a big room full of progressives, is there? And it is great to be with you and I want to thank CAP for convening us at this moment where we need to be together and for helping to energize this movement and for everything CAP does as one of the centers of this movement. I want to say it is so important to all of us to have a place like this that we can all connect together and I will say in particular for New York City – we've been in constant collaboration with CAP because so much good thinking is happening here and we particularly have been devoted to the Smart Cities initiative, Smart on Crime initiative. Which is so important for finding ways to have fairer and better policing and I'm going to speak about that in a moment because this one of the most central issues facing our country right now.

But look, I think you are hearing it – you certainly heard in that wonderful panel we just had – this is a time to be passionate, this is a time to be bold, this is a time for progressives to be proud of who we are. This is a time of extraordinary opportunity. I would say unprecedented opportunity. And it's a time to through away conventional wisdom. I was thinking about talking to all of you and a scene came into my mind from one of the ultimate examples of skewering conventional wisdom and that is the movie Moneyball. And in Moneyball there's a scene where there is a despondency at the loss of a big slugger and the team's all worried and everyone is worried, and the fans are worried. And the smart analyst says no wait there's more to it than this. This reality opens up a whole world of possibilities. And we have to see this moment as that. This is, look, it's painful moment on so many levels. It's a moment that is distressing, it's a moment where real harm is being done to real people but it is also an incredibly ripe moment. And one we could not have foreseen or imagined. It's a time of tremendous possibilities. And we as progressives and as leaders have to get that point across to everyone we encounter all over this country.

This is our mission to communicate that urgency and to communicate that possibility. I often feel that progressives as good as our intentions are, that we talk ourselves out of our own power. That

somehow we don't count our victories as well as we might. And I have to be confessional on this point, I spent a long time doing the same thing. I think a lot of us over the years were mis-educated. We were taught to be something less than proud of what we are as progressives. And we were taught to water down our vision and our goals and our message and it didn't work. It held us back. For me maybe some of the things that happen in New York – the particular effect we felt from the Great Recession and the events around Occupy Wall Street and other things, maybe they jarred me and opened my mind in a particular way.

So when I ran for Mayor in 2013, I decided it was time to be blunt and to be bold and to be clear. I called for tax on the wealthy to pay for Pre-K for all of the children of the city. The people liked that. They believed in that.

[Applause]

I called for taking on landlords and real estate developers that had been unfair to communities. I called for ending a broken policy of stop-and-frisk that was dividing police and community and unfairly targeting young men of color. These were not conventional wisdom positions. They were not supposed to be the winning hand because we had been taught the wrong way to think about what the winning hand was as well as what the right thing to do was.

Well, I pursued that agenda and you will not be surprised to know the conventional wisdom mongers presented a vision of the sky falling if this were to come to pass in New York City. Particularly on the question of crime, the consistent message – and there were wonderful advertisements from my republican opponent, the grainy images of the 1970's and examples of disorder and chaos and literally the concept that if elect a progressive we will go back to the bad old days. That's what was being pervaded. The people did not buy it. Not in the least because the people felt a yearning for change.

And it's a lesson to me that when we are bold and clear and sharp people get it. People feel it. We proceeded in this city to end that broken policy of stop-and-frisk. We proceeded to give rent freezes to folks who needed them. We gave lawyers to stop evictions. We got to Pre-K For All. Now we are well on our way to 3-K, kids who are three years old will have universal free early childhood education in the next few years in the city. And that's going to change things for so many families. So we took that moment, fought that conventional wisdom and actually made the changes that people can feel in their lives.

I want to tell you about this because it's such a good example, I think, of what we can achieve when we stay true to our values and how people experiencing it believe more deeply than ever in a progress vision and once they experience some they want more.

Look, this point about boldness, it is so important that we set big goals and not be afraid of that. We embrace it. In fact when you set big goals, people can make sense of it, they can align to it, they can feel it. It keeps everyone in the equation honest and accountable. Those big, bold goals make sense.

You say Pre-K for All, you say end stop-and-frisk – whatever it is, it captures the public's imagination because it is sharp and clear. So we said we had a goal of being the safest big city in America. We had to be safe and get safer. And then we added another goal, to be the fairest big city in America, to be a place where people really felt deeply bought in, where they felt like stakeholders.

Think about our society right now all over this country. Think about the inequalities that persist. Think about how many people feel left out and how much the 2016 election reflected that sense of disconnect. Our role as progressives is to show people a society they could be proud of, they can feel bought into, they can feel that is actually for them. That's what we sought to do.

When you do that you see the social fabric start to heal. You see the wounds of the past start to heal in a real way. And I want to give you a quick example of what we did with policing because in terms of big ideas this was the one that, in so many ways, we had to address head on.

Nothing speaks to the quality of a society more than whether people are policed fairly, right. If they feel they are being treated fairly by the police, it's the ultimate representation of their society, of their government. It speaks volumes. And if they feel they aren't treated fairly, it's the ultimate indictment and the ultimate message of an unequal society.

So we had to do something very, very different with policing. In the words of our Chief of Department, Terry Monahan, we had to invent an entirely new type of policing. And what we created was neighborhood policing, an idea that's so beautifully simple but so powerful, to literally reconnect police and community by putting the human element back into the equation.

Unfortunately for so many years, everyone in this room knows it, there was a sense in many communities that police were from some place outside not connected to the community, left at the end of the day, and no one felt any investment in each other.

Neighborhood policing turns that idea on its head. We train our officers and prepare them to go into one neighborhood and stay there for a long time and the message is you will make everyone safer, you will make community members and officers alike safer if everyone actually has a human bond, a human relationship right down to the notion that our officers now regularly give their cell phone number and their email address to neighborhood residents so when they have a problem they go directly to the cop on the beat that they have come to know.

It's a very different approach and it has brought out a whole wealth of possibilities because now people are talking to each other, they are knowing each other by first name, they are thanking each other, they are supporting each other. This idea, it sounds maybe like a feel-good thing but it's been one of the best tools we've ever created to fight crime and keep people safe.

Because in that dialogue, in that bond we find more and more that our officers get the information they need to stop crime from happening and everyone recognizes in this new bond something that was a yearning for a long time, a sense of actually being on the same side.

This is what we have experienced through neighborhood policing. I want to tell you what it's helped us to achieve. Crime is down four years in a row in our city at the same time last year we had 100,000 fewer arrests than just four years ago. Think about how that turns the conventional wisdom on its head.

Crime down with 100,000 fewer arrests at the same time because there is a different reality, a different focus because of the bond between police and community much more is getting done, much less time is wasted, much less conflict.

I want to make it vivid to you. Three simple, very fast vignettes. One – I was on the subway platform at Penn Station last year. A police officer is there, could have been out of central casting – big, muscular guy, young guy, happened to be Caucasian. I went up to, got talking to him, he talked about the changes he's seen in the force. I couldn't tell if he liked them or he didn't. I said, well, what do you think, what does it mean?

He says it means that people are talking to us a lot more. I said, okay, why do you think so? He said because people will talk to you if they're not afraid of you. That was one of those moments that crystalized for me what change we were making.

Another example, I was in East New York, Brooklyn, one of our poorest neighborhoods, and a commanding officer in a precinct was talking to me about all the things they were doing to try and connect with the neighborhood. He talked about midnight basketball and all sorts of things that I had heard before. And then he said, just in passing, and yeah we're doing the Prom dresses as well. I said Prom dresses? What do you mean? He said the police officers are taking a collection in the precinct for young women who want to go to a Prom but can't afford a dress. And I thought how that changes the tone and the reality and the emotional connection between police and community.

And the last one is so simple, it's so beautiful. I was in East Harlem and a mechanic who worked in our Housing Authority – I was visiting this housing development and he saw me talking to a couple of young Latino officers, a woman and a man, Latino and Latina, who were very invested in this neighborhood policing idea, who talked about it with vigor and emotion and how much they loved getting to be a part of the community. And they walked away, and I turned to this guy and I said what do you think? And he said I grew up in this neighborhood my whole life. He said I always hoped we'd see something like this. And I said what do you mean? And he said a simple phrase that captured it all. He said we always wanted the cops to be our friends. That is what neighborhood policing is achieving in our city.

Now look, there's a lot more to do, and I want to be blunt about this. There's a lot more to do. There are still inequalities we have not addressed. There are still things that have to be resolved. There's wounds of the past that haven't healed. There's inequality still staring us in the face. And look, we have worked incessantly to create a fairer type of policing. But, I can be honest about the fact there's much more to be done.

And that's why today I'm announcing that the NYPD will overhaul and reform its policies related to marijuana enforcement in the next 30 days.

[Applause]

We must and we will end unnecessary arrests and end disparity in enforcement. It's time for those to be a thing of the past in New York City and all over this country. This is the kind of change we can make, but we can make it because of all the changes that came before. And this is the point I will conclude with. Each change builds the next one. And as progressives we have to have that sense, again, of our own power and possibility. Be bold. Be fast. Build change because it opens the door. And what you thought was impossible just a short time ago suddenly becomes real and tangible and possible. We're seeing it in New York City. We're seeing it all over the country.

I have to tell you, I feel a lot of confidence and a lot of hope in this moment. I look around at what's happening, and I'm not missing the problems that are occurring here in Washington, all – again, the pain that's being caused, but I'm more focused on the grassroots. I have the perspective of my city and I talk to mayors and activists from all over the country and I see the movements that are springing up. I see the changes that are being made.

I feel like we're seeing something we never saw before. I feel like change is happening and movements are growing in ways that are literally unimaginable. And I'll say them in very quick succession to make the point. Everything I'm going to note has happened in the last year in America. What the teachers have done in West Virginia, and Oklahoma, and Arizona, and Kentucky. What the students in Parkland, Florida have done. What the Me Too movement has done. What the Black Lives Matter movement has done. The elections in Virginia for the House of Delegates, the elections in Alabama for U.S. Senate. This all happened simultaneously.

I say it, and I don't exaggerate, we are living in a time of miracles. We're living in a time we could not have imagined. We hold the keys. It is about us being bold and relentless. So I can say this to all the good progressives in the room, we've seen a lot of times in history where we felt left out. We felt there was no possibility. We felt we couldn't make the changes we believed in. But we've never seen anything [inaudible] we've never seen the possibilities that are as ripe as this moment.

So I say to all of you, good and strong progressives, this is our time. Thank you.

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