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**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO APPEARS LIVE ON MORNING JOE**

**Willie Geist:** Now, the Mayor of New York City – Mr. Bill de Blasio.

Mr. Mayor, good to see you.

**Mika Brzezinski:** Important question – important question.

**Geist:** You can have the first question.

**Brzezinski:** Mr. Mayor, how tall are you?

**Mayor Bill de Blasio:** Almost 6’6.

**Brzezinski:** Let me just check.

**Mayor:** Almost.

**Brzezinski:** Really? Tall. Tall guy.

**Nicholas Confessore:** How much do you weigh?

**Mayor:** 210.

**Brzezinski:** 210.

**Confessore:** 6’6. 210.

**Mayor:** Full disclosure.

**Confessore:** That’s interesting.

**Geist:** Compared to the president.

**Brzezinski:** It's weird. Okay. Thank you.

Willie, carry on.

**Geist:** It's a svelte 210.

**Mayor:** Svelte?!

**Geist:** 210 – I wish I had those numbers myself.

**Mayor:** Today's adjective – svelte.

**Brzezinski:** I really don't mind his numbers.

**Geist:** We've got a million questions for you.

**Brzezinski:** The president just – okay, anyhow.

**Geist:** We're all New Yorkers, but there are national issues at play here. I want to just talk about something that's happening in the city – something extraordinary – a combination of City Hall and the New York Police Department and the record low crime numbers that came in at the end of 2017. How in a city of 8.5 million people you have that few murders, that little violent crime? What is happening with the New York City police that has allowed for those historically low numbers?

**Mayor:** So, to put it in context, our overall crime levels – you have to go back to the 1950s to see crime this low. Specifically with murder, the last time we had this few murders was 1951 when the Dodgers were still playing in Brooklyn. And when you think about how we got there, it is one part evolution and improvement of strategies – COMP STAT that Bill Bratton innovated. It's one part precision policing – actually sending the police where the most violent crime is happening – pinpointing, surging in those areas, and knocking out gangs in particular that were causing so much of the violence.

But the other big piece is neighborhood policing, which is a systematic effort to create new relationships between police and community and heal some of the problems, some of the pain that occurred in the past. It's very much a matter of training our police to build those community relationships, to deescalate tensions, and the payoff is not only a human or moral one – it's also a practical one. The more that community feels close to their police, the more they share information and help police to stop crimes or to find people who committed crimes.

It's amazing. When I talk to our officers who are involved in this neighborhood policing initiative they go chapter and verse about all the community residents who now have their cell phone number, their email address – personally they know first-name basis people in the community who will give them the information without even asking. Telling them where someone has a gun, when there's about to be a gang problem, and the police get there first.

**Geist:** The NYPD obviously has cracked the code on something here, so why do you think it's been so difficult for other cities – Chicago, Baltimore both jump to mind – to figure out what you all have figured out in New York?

**Mayor:** I think you have to be honest about the interplay of crime and other issue. Baltimore has a horrible income inequality gap and lack of opportunity in poor communities. Chicago has had legendary segregation and a sense of unfairness affecting communities of color for decades. These are underlying problems that I think New York was able to move past more – not perfectly.

But I think at the same time it was what we learned about both strategic policing and neighborhood policing. I think you have to create that trust again. It doesn't happen by itself. You have to actually train the officers in having a deep sense of building the community relationship, and you have to give communities a sense to air their concerns and grievances and show that you're actually responding. We had a horrible and broken policy of stop and frisk for years in this city where parents and grandparents felt their good, law-abiding children were being treated like suspects even if they hadn't done anything. It created a real riff with police. We ended that broken policy, and it helped to regenerate trust. And again the irony is when police and community get closer together, crime goes down. I think there was an assumption –

**Brzezinski:** Right, you've proven it.

**Mayor:** Yes, I think there was a stereotype somehow it was a liberal affectation to think police and community relationship was a nice thing. No, it's also a very practical, high impact thing because that communication – when the police know the community is on their side, it's better for the police in every way. When the community thinks that my police officer – he or she is here to protect me – it changes the whole dynamic.

**Brzezinski:** Right.

**Steven Rattner:** Mr. Mayor, so that's all good news. Nobody can disagree. And there's lots of good news in the city, but probably the thing may be most upsetting the city residents right now is the state of the MTA, the subways and the buses. How did we get in this mess on the subway? There's estimates now it would cost over \$100 billion to really bring the subways to something that approximates state of the art. Is there any real prospect of getting out of this mess within a reasonable time frame? What's going on with the subways?

**Mayor:** Look, I think we can move forward. The State of New York controls the MTA, but we are going to all work together to try and address this. I think in the end we need a reliable revenue source that bluntly politically there has not been a commitment to achieving in past years. I believe the tax on millionaires and billionaires is the best way to do it. I think that gives us a renewable, reliable source that we can put into those core needs.

Look, here is something that Chicago did better than New York. Chicago invested in the most unsexy, fundamental elements of running their subways in ways that New York did not and for decades where we did not make the kind of investments we should have. Ok, we are going to

recoup that now, but there is revenue out there if we could only agree to have the political will to go get it and make that change.

**Mika Brzezinski:** Nick?

**Confessore:** So Mr. Mayor, the pension fund for New York is going divest from fossil fuels. It's a big move of yours. But obviously fossil fuel stocks are doing quite well, and will probably, you know, go further with this tax bill and the job of the pension bill is to provide pensions. So at what point are you taking away from the ability over the pension bill to actually do well for the pensioners by making it a tool of political activism for values that you support and many New Yorkers support, obviously.

**Mayor:** Nick, it's a fundamental question, whenever you look at pensions, you have to think about the people we are here to protect, our retirees, and our fiduciary responsibility comes up front.

But you know what? If you're playing the long game in investments, fossil fuels don't make a lot of sense. You're talking about an industry whose reserves, whose resources, a lot of us believe will never be tapped, will never be utilized in large measure. It's not a great long term investment because the world, rightfully, is more and more moving away from fossil fuels.

Now look, our national government unfortunately is moving in the wrong direction. Donald Trump took us out of the Paris Agreement and is obviously encouraging further oil exploration at the very time when so much of the world is saying, no we have to go the other way. That's why New York City acted too, we need to show that the local level – we're going to go and address the challenge of climate change even if our national government isn't. And this is what you're seeing around the country more and more, New York is trying to provide real leadership in this.

We were definitive in a way, bluntly, few other jurisdictions had been. We said, we will be out of fossil fuels. We will divest fully in the next five years. We don't think it's a good investment. We think it's bad for the earth. We think it's causing the climate change that afflicts coastal cities like New York. There is no question there are other quality investments we can make. But if we are going to jolt this dependence we have on fossil fuel, we have to do something differently.

And that's also why we are suing five of the biggest petroleum companies, because like the tobacco companies some years ago, they understood this crisis, they tried very intently to cover up the information about climate change, and project a whole different, you know, a propaganda campaign suggesting climate change wasn't real and go ahead and keep using your fossil fuels. They damaged our society, they – City like New York, that's meant billions and billions of dollars of damage, for example, from Hurricane Sandy.

So the local level, we have to act now, especially because our national government is not. In New York – look, we decided to be bold. We decided to double down on addressing climate change and on doing things like neighborhood policing because our federal government is not leading in these areas, so we have to take the lead.

**Brzezinski:** Just want to ask you about President Trump, I think we share some concerns and he had the exam with the doctor who've – New York Times here, "after exam President is found to be sound mind and body". I'm not sure the exam included a neuro-psych, I don't know, but they say cognitively he is in order. Is that good news or bad news to you?

**Mayor:** Of course it's good news –

**Brzezinski:** – No, I just wonder because it then takes the behavior that concerns us and puts it in a different realm. So I wasn't trying to be funny, at all –

**Mayor:** Right, I know you weren't, I know you weren't. It's the same question –

**Brzezinski:** Yeah.

**Mayor:** Do you want, even if you disagree with a party or leader, do you want them to succeed for the good of the country? Obviously, I hope he is sane.

**Brzezinski:** Of course, I mean everyone hopes one is well –

**Mayor:** Right. I hope he is sane. His actions don't suggest it.

**Brzezinski:** I know.

**Mayor:** But I don't know, I'm not a psychiatrist, I don't know where to separate a clinical issue from a judgement issue or an ego issue.

**Brzezinski:** Right.

**Mayor:** I do know that he's divisive in a way we have no previous model for –

**Brzezinski:** I know.

**Mayor:** And it is increasingly repellent to the American people, when I was – we were just talking, Willie and I, about – I was in Iowa a few weeks back, 60 percent of the voters in Iowa, according to the Des Moines Register poll a few weeks back, disapproved of Donald Trump. This is a state he won –

**Brzezinski:** I know.

**Mayor:** – 60 percent disapprove and I think if you know the political culture of Iowa, which is one that really values civility –

**Brzezinski:** Yeah.

**Mayor:** – people look at this and they say, “This is not the American way. This is not an acceptable thing for a leader and a role model. And it’s not going to help the society move forward.” so I think it is – let’s put aside whether there is a clinical problem or not –

**Brzezinski:** Right.

**Mayor:** – there is a leadership problem, a judgement problem, an ego problem, and it is inconsistent with American values –

**Brzezinski:** Right, an illness can be treated, I just – really can’t.

**Mayor:** And Mika, by the way, thank you for the point you made. It can’t ever be accepted as normal. We can’t get numb to it –

**Brzezinski:** It’s not.

**Mayor:** – and it reminds me of the Army-McCarthy hearings, if you certainly know your history, there is a certain point when the outrage consolidates. And we have to work toward that, but we can never become comfortable with the unacceptable.

**Brzezinski:** Totally agree.

New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio – thank you very much for being on this morning.

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