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**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO DELIVERS REMARKS AT MOTT HAVEN
REFORMED CHURCH**

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Well, good morning, Mott Haven. And first, I want to give honor to God, without him this day would not be possible.

Pastor Patricia Sealy: Amen.

Mayor: Amen. Reverend, I want to thank you. I want to wish all the members of the congregation, a very happy Father's Day. Reverend, thank you for the powerful sermon. Thank you for 10 years of leading this congregation and spreading the word and doing so much good in the community. And I really want to thank you also for your advice and counsel, Reverend, as part of our faith council in such a challenging time in our history. You've really been there for all of us. And so, I want to thank you. I want to say to everyone, it's an honor to be with you. I'm going to be brief, but I hope to say something meaningful to you. And I want to say thank you for the chance to be with you. It's also an honor to be in the presence of Bishop Samuel. Thank you. And I want to thank this congregation because this has been a congregation that has made such a powerful impact on the community. Reverend, I know that you and so many others in the congregation fought to close Rikers Island, and I want to thank you for that fight. I want to thank you for caring and doing something about it. I want to thank you for making a difference. And it is a reminder that even when we feel that things are unjust and possibly immovable – 85 years, Rikers Island was a part of the life of this city and people thought it might be there for a long, long time. But this congregation and other good people said, no, we could go a different way. And now we are. I want to thank you for that.

I want to thank you for the fact that when the coronavirus hit and people were confused and scared and in pain and losing loved ones, this congregation responded by helping others, by feeding people who didn't have food, by making such a difference. And I think as we think about this moment, there's nothing – we've literally never been through anything like this. None of us has ever experienced a health care crisis of the magnitude of the coronavirus affecting every part of our city, but not fairly and in any way evenly, but in fact, very unjustly, unevenly, desperately affecting communities of color much more deeply. And that pain's been going on now for over three months, the pain of people losing their livelihoods, the pain of people not knowing what the future would bring, if they could pay for the rent, if they'd had enough food to eat. And then on top of it, the injustice that has been spoken to so powerfully in recent weeks around the city, around this world.

So, I want to say to everyone at this moment, if there's anyone who's a part of this congregation who is angry or hurt or in pain or feels that the injustice that surrounds us is profoundly unacceptable. I have some inkling – I can't say I've walked a mile in your shoes, but I sure have some inkling of the depth of that pain and what we have to do about it. I certainly know that people are not going to believe until they see change with their own eyes. That it's not enough to say that one day there will be change. I know that too many times people have seen the institutions in our society let them down. Part of the pain is not just the physical pain, the loss of a loved one or the loss of a job, or the disrespect that pervades life. That part of the pain is the reality that the institutions, the government, the police, all the things that were supposed to be there and treating people fairly and equally have not. And so when you think about the NYPD, when you think about City Hall, you, unfortunately, I believe, think of so many times when you felt you weren't heard or seen or supported or treated fairly.

We've been trying out over about six-and-a-half years to do something about it, but we have not gotten far enough and that is abundantly clear, but we did show we could close Rikers Island. We did show we could end stop-and-frisk. We did show we could reduce arrests, we could do so many things differently. And now we've got to do a lot more. And that's my point, not to in any way misunderstand or not hear the anger and the frustration and the dissatisfaction, but to also say that there is a path forward that can lead to real and tangible change. In the last days, we saw something extraordinary in our State Legislature – ending a law that had shielded police disciplinary records from public view, opening up the full truth of the discipline process at the NYPD. That was a law that for years and decades looked like it never could move in and it was suddenly gone because of a movement that called for change. And the Legislature acted.

Here in New York City, I announced that we were going to take money from the NYPD and shift it to youth programs, shift it to the social services, go at the root cause of the problem. We're providing additional funding for community based solutions, the Cure Violence Movement, that Crisis Management System, community people stopping violence before it happens, addressing the issues of their own community with their own leadership. We're making changes that we have to make, because sometimes communities are telling us that the police personnel in their precincts aren't the right people. And we need to hear that. And I know that's been a concern for you, Reverend, and for this congregation, and it's time for us to act on that and we will. And we have to come to grips with something so foundational, which is that when we say words like structural or institutional racism, that only describes a very general reality, but we need to actually shine a light on what it means and all of its specificity.

And so, the First Lady announced on Friday, for the first time in the history of this country, a City Commission on Racial Justice and Reconciliation, patterned on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa, under Nelson Mandela. A commission that will officially recognize the extent of racism in every part of the life of the city and in the official reality of City agencies and policies and law, and then systematically work to undo it. Just like we took a bad 85-year tradition of Rikers Island and undid it and said it would be no more, we can work piece by piece to dismantle a racist structure in our own city. And we're not going to do that by failing to acknowledge the truth. We're going to actually make it an official act to acknowledge the truth and then piece by piece, take the action.

So, Reverend, thank you. Thank you for being someone who I know inspires your congregation and believes that something can change. Thank you to all who work in that process of change on Mott Haven. I conclude today with a simple point, we are in a transformative moment. It is a moment filled with pain, filled with fear, filled with confusion, but it is also a transformative moment. We've seen them before in history. They come along once every few generations, but this is that moment. And we must be a different kind of greatest generation. We're willing to tell truths that often were ignored or that people were too afraid to acknowledge for 400 years in this nation. Let us be the generation that finally tells the whole truth and does something about it. And I truly believe we can. I thank you all. God bless you.

Pastor Sealy: Thank you, Mr. Mayor. Thank you for being truthful. Thank you for being transparent. And I do believe that we are in a transformative moment in New York City and in this nation. And, you know, when you give birth to something, you suffer birth pains, but then there's joy when that baby is brought for. And so I thank you. I thank Dominique, and I'm just looking forward to being able to continue to work with the city, to bring about the kinds of changes that need to be brought about so that New York really is the greatest city in the world.

Mayor: Amen.

Pastor Sealy: Thank you for being with us today.

Mayor: Thank you. God Bless.

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