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**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO APPEARS LIVE ON CNN'S RELIABLE
SOURCES WITH BRIAN STELTER**

Brian Stelter: Welcome back to Reliable Sources, I'm Brian Stelter. If you ask New York City's Mayor what lies behind a lot of the negativity and the divisiveness gripping this nation, he's got a simple answer for you. He says it's the media empire of Rupert Murdoch that's at fault. Bill de Blasio has long been a critic of the hometown New York Post newspaper; Murdoch has owned it for years. He says it's right wing propaganda. Now he's also been talking about Fox News as well, of course on week when Laura Ingraham's hateful comments are in the news. This critique of right wing corporate media coming from the left, may have appeal in the 2020 Democratic primary, but isn't it rather Trumpian? Mayor Bill de Blasio joins me now here on set. Mayor, thanks for coming over.

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Thank you, Brian.

Stelter: What is your critique of Murdoch? You were quoted recently by The Guardian saying "imagine the country if Murdoch had never had papers or networks here?"

Mayor: We would be a more unified country. There would be less overt hate; there would be less appeal to racial division. I guarantee it because what Murdoch did, through Fox News and the New York Post, among others, is to create a dynamic where that stuff could come out in the open. We saw it in New York City for years and years, where race was infused into the dialogue in a very negative way and it was a sort of an apocalyptic vision was created of the notion of going back to a time of crime and decay and always putting that through a lens of people of color as the villains. Now whether you talk about the Central Park Five or so many other instances, certainly you saw that around the election of David Dinkins in New York, the way he was vilified by the Post throughout his mayoralty, but you've this on a national level as too. They don't just dog whistle, they go a lot farther than that. They put race front and center and they try to stir the most negative impulses in this country. There is no Donald Trump without News Corp. I firmly believe that. He never gets to the presidency, because he would never have been elevated the way he was consistently for years and years. So I believe in free strong media with diverse views; I'll defend it with all I got. But we have to be able to call out when a particular company has a corporate agenda, has a political agenda, and has very effectively changed the American discourse. And by the way, when I was growing up with, I think, some real heroes of journalism,

Walter Cronkite's an obvious one and Murrow and so many others before him; they set a tone of evenness, respect. The Civil Rights Movement of the Sixties got a fair hearing because the American media gave them that opportunity to be heard. Today, you have one outlet and one outlet only that is constantly sewing division and we should be able to talk about that.

Stelter: So you'd rather not have the New York Post or Fox News exist?

Mayor: Look, it's a free country. I'm saying because they exist we've been changed for the worst. Now if you said—

Stelter: But isn't that like saying they're fake news or an enemy of the people?

Mayor: No, because I think what the President has tried to do is create a dynamic that is anti-media, anti-free speech, undermining democratic norms. This is a president that doesn't really believe in democratic norms, it's quite clear. I believe in them deeply. And I believe in a free discourse—

Stelter: Sure sounds like you feel anti-media feelings.

Mayor: No, I feel anti-News Corp feelings. I feel very angry when I see a media outlet, a corporate giant, a profit-making giant dividing people. And creating hatred and negativity and changing our political landscape for the worst. Now I think we have to be able to talk about that. We have to respect their constitutional rights, of course. But we also are consumers. We're also citizens. If we don't talk about it, and we they continue to do this to our country, something's wrong.

Stelter: There's lots of media critics out there but politicians make lousy media critics. Why do you feel it's your role to be calling out a newspaper because you don't like the content?

Mayor: Because I feel it's not happening enough. Now I do agree with you—

Stelter: So you're doing it because nobody else is? Is that what you're saying?

Mayor: No it's not because nobody else is, It's not happening the way it needs to. I agree with you. Anyone in public life, we're going to get criticized by all kinds of media, right, left, and center. And we have to respect it and we have to take it and we have to listen. By the way, even the New York Post sometimes writes a story on something happening with a government agency that proves to be right and we have to address it, we have to fix it. But I think it's also fair to say that when you look at CNN, for example, you look at the major networks, they do not harbor a daily, hourly political agenda and bias. They provide both sides, it's a part of their DNA; they may have values and views. When it comes to News Corp, they have a political mission, and we have to be able to talk about it—

Stelter: By singling out News Corp it's like – it's like Trump singling out CNN. Two wrongs don't make a right?

Mayor: No.

Stelter: Two versions of something bad aren't—

Mayor: I couldn't disagree more. CNN on a regular basis provides both sides of the story. CNN, you could find – find some politics in CNN but it doesn't even come close to resembling the clear political agenda of News Corp. Now again to your point, why should we talk about it, because it's changing our lives and if we don't talk about it how do we address it?

Stelter: Look I had staffers of the New York Post say to me this week say to me, you are doing exactly what Donald Trump does.

Mayor: Couldn't be more untrue.

Stelter: So you think it's a false equivalency?

Mayor: Unbelievably false—

Stelter: But two things can be bad even if they're not equal. They can both be bad.

Mayor: Ok so let's break it down. If one agrees, and look at the facts over decades, does News Corp have a right wing agenda? I think that one is pretty obvious. Do they sensationalize, racialize, and divide? Yes. Does that compare to CNN, NBC, CBS, ABC, The New York Times, The Washington Post? No. One of these things is not like the other. They have a right to exist, but we also have a right to confront what they are doing to our country and not simply stand idly by because we fear a comparison to Trump—

Stelter: Okay, but if Post staffers say that makes me feel unsafe, leaving my building in Midtown Manhattan, isn't that a problem?

Mayor: It's not a problem if we say we respect all media, we defend all media's rights, but we also have to be able to say if a media outlet is affecting the national discourse in a certain way. We can't—

Stelter: Are you doing this because you want to run for president in 2020?

Mayor: I am Mayor of New York City and I will continue to be; my term goes to 2021.

Stelter: Because I think Bernie Sanders hit on a vein when he attacked the corporate media in 2016. It makes me wonder if you view this as a wedge issue or a campaign issue.

Mayor: I've been talking about the corporate media since the 1980s—

Stelter: That's true—

Mayor: Okay so the fact is—

Stelter: You have been, you have been. Let's go through some examples actually because something you said about the tabloids I thought was pretty hurtful. Here's what of some you said according to private emails that were leaked out, released by court order actually, at one point you said the news media is pitiful. Saying it's sad for our city and nation. You accused the New York Times of bias. At another point you said maybe if the New York Daily News went online only that would be good for us. But know the Daily News has had to lay off half its staff. Isn't that hurting our city?

Mayor: What I was calling out is the sensationalism which I think has infected the Daily News too much was as well, which creates a bad civic discourse. We want a respectful, high road, intelligent civic discourse. What I think has happened to tabloid culture has actually created a lot of division in my city and a lot of obscuring of some of the bigger issues affecting millions of people. We have a massive income inequality crisis in our city. But if you look at the tabloid approach, it takes the attention off of that and on to unfortunately a lot of the divisions that exist, particularly along the lines of race. I want to see that fixed. But I also believe the Daily News plays an absolutely crucial role. I would like it sold to someone who cares about New York City. Tronc., its parent corporation, does not. They don't want real insightful reporting. They don't want the Daily News to dig in to everyday stories of everyday New Yorkers. They want a profit and they're laying off half the newsroom, that's unacceptable to. So, I hope you can hear that I believe in free strong media and diverse views. But that doesn't mean we should be silent on the outcomes of some of the approaches if they are specifically for an agenda and that's what gets me back to News Corp. I don't accuse the Daily News or New York Times of having that kind of an agenda. I sometimes say the New York Times takes an elite view of the world too often, I don't think that's a news flash. But I respect what they do and I respond to what they do. But if we have a force in our society that has fundamentally changed us, just again, think of that equation, a world without News Corp. A world with the kind of reporting, both sides, and a real devotion to objectivity that was the norm up through the 1970s in this country. What would we look like today? I guarantee you Donald Trump would not be president, and I guarantee you that what we're seeing today in Washington, the right, and the alt-right, and the negativity and the division coming out in the fore and feeling it has license, that wouldn't be true and that's good when those forces feel they don't have license.

Stelter: I still think politicians make lousy media critics though.

Mayor: We may. But if you're someone who has a belief system as I do, you can't stay silent if you see something not being recognized. It's not the same. And this is part of my argument. You know, sometimes when I've made this criticism people have tried to say we have to defend the Post or everyone else; I defend the right to exist. But can we not acknowledge that they are different than essentially every other outlet out there. And in a world where we almost saw Sinclair take another huge step forward and build its empire, and we can also see some of the same tendencies in Sinclair towards clear political agenda infecting news reporting; that should be a concern for all Americans. Separating editorial from reporting I think that's a pretty core American civic value that does not happen at Fox that does not happen at News Corp.

Stelter: Mayor, thank you so much for joining me today.

Mayor: Thank you.

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