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TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO APPEARS LIVE ON MSNBC'S MORNING JOE

Willie Geist: We want to turn now to the debate over police funding that is currently at the center of a budget battle in New York City. Last night, New York City officials agreed to an \$88.1 billion proposed budget, which includes a \$1 billion cut from the city's Police Department or reallocation of those funds. Joining us now, the Mayor of New York City Bill de Blasio. Mayor de Blasio, good to have you with us this morning. So, it seems you haven't pleased anyone, the people who say you're taking money away from the NYPD at a time when crime is going up and others who say you're just moving money around to other departments by moving it outside the NYPD and putting that on other balance sheets. So, walk us through a bit, this new budget, specifically as it pertains to the NYPD.

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Yeah, Willie, this is really profound change, and it's a moment where we need profound change in this city, in this country. We're taking a billion dollars out of the NYPD. We're reducing the size of the NYPD, we're reducing overtime, we're moving some of the functions that NYPD does now. They will be replaced by civilians handling those functions, who can do them better. And we're going to take that money and put it into youth initiatives. We've got to help young people, particularly in this tough, tough moment in history. So, we're taking money from the police, putting it into youth initiatives. I think that will help us be a safer city in the future, that investment in young people, and that we're taking another half-billion and creating recreation centers, community centers for young people, broadband access for young people who live in public housing. These kinds of investments, and then other reforms, we have to be in a constant place of reform.

So, we're going to get rid of solitary confinement in our jails. We're going to take this moment in history and amplify it by taking the Black Lives Matter symbolism and putting it all over this city, including right in front of Trump Tower. And then we're going to do something even bigger and have a commission – a Commission on Racial Justice and Reconciliation, patterned on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa, that will systematically, officially identify where structural and institutional racism exists in New York City government and in our city in general, and then specifically define how we will end it, how we will tear it down, how we will transform, and put real resources and policies in place to change it. So, this is going to be a constant moment of change and reform in New York City.

Geist: I got another question on the budget, but did you say officially, you're going to paint Black Lives Matter on Fifth Avenue in front of Trump Tower? Is that right?

Mayor: Yes, we are. And it's an important message to the whole nation. And obviously we want the president to hear it because he's never shown respect for those three words. When he hears Black Lives Matter, he presents a horrible negative reality of something that doesn't exist and he

misses the underlying meaning that we're saying we have to honor role of African Americans in our history and in our society, very much what you were talking about a few moments ago, and we have to make it come alive today. So, we're going to make it really clear to the president. It's going to be right outside his doorstep.

Geist: You've heard critics from your own Police Department, including the Commissioner, saying there is a “storm on the horizon”. That's a quote from Commissioner Shea. He says, we're just seeing the beginning of the iceberg that's coming in terms of crime in New York City. Again, this isn't off the record. This isn't the police union. This is your own Commissioner, who's worried now that these cuts will make worse the crime that has gone up in the last few weeks in terms of shootings and that started well before the pandemic. Do you worry about quality of life in New York City in terms of crime, with these budget cuts?

Mayor: Willie, we have to keep people safe. The way we engineered this budget is to make sure we can keep our patrol strength consistent. We're going to save money in a lot of ways, but still keep the number of officers that we need on patrol in our communities. Our biggest problem right now is that the pandemic has shut down the criminal justice system so our courts are not really operating. Those who need to be off the streets are not at this point. That's a lot of what the Commissioner is talking about. We need to fix that underlying problem. We need to see prosecutions of gun violence by our DAs. There's a lot that has to happen quickly to address the safety issue. But at the same time, we have to recognize that when we're investing in our young people, we are going at another one of the issues around crime. If we don't give positive alternatives to young people – police have been saying this for generations, if you don't put positive alternatives out there for young people, you're not going to be safer.

Geist: Mike Barnicle has a question for you, Mr. Mayor, Mike –

Mike Barnicle: Mr. Mayor, the former resident of Trump Tower, where you are thankfully going to paint the Black Lives Matter on Fifth Avenue, he is basically running for re-election under the premise that he's trying to convince people, white people especially, that he and he alone is the person standing between us, white people, and them. He's been doing it consistently throughout his entire career but now he's doing it consistently as President of the United States. When that happens, and it is happening I would submit, does that not put enormous pressure on any police department, but in this case the New York City Police Department, enormous pressure on them? And how do you deal with the inequity of that pressure on one specific municipal unit, the New York Police Department?

Mayor: It's a great, great question, Mike. And you're right, Donald Trump is following the footsteps of Strom Thurmond and George Wallace in trying to tell white America he will be their white savior. And I think it's incumbent upon all of us as white people to say, we're not looking for a savior. We're not looking for Donald Trump to keep a racist institutional reality in place. We are actually trying to transform this country. If we don't transform America, we're all going to be hurt. It can't be the America it was meant to be. And so I think when it comes back here, what it says to me is, for our police, we've got to recognize – by the way, we have a majority people of color police force here in New York City. So, we have to honor and respect the crucial role our police play, but also recognize that there's been a long history of inequality and racist realities in police forces all over the country that we have to address it, cleanse it, change it. And that's actually the pathway forward to safety for everyone. When police and community can feel

real consistent, mutual respect is when the officers are safer and communities are safer. We've been doing that with the neighborhood policing strategy in this city. We've seen the way it heals, but we've got to make more change now, because if we don't deepen that reform, we will never be able to be as safe as we need to be.

Joe Scarborough: All right, Mr. Mayor, thank you so much for being with us. We greatly appreciate it. By the way, what's the timeframe – when are you going to be painting Black Lives Matter on Fifth Avenue?

Mayor: That is going to be in a matter of days, Joe. And you know, I know you love Florida, you come from Florida – Donald Trump's new state. But whenever he comes back to his old state, he'll get a message that he still doesn't understand. Maybe seeing it outside his doorstep will help him get the point.

Scarborough: All right. Thank you so much, Mr. Mayor – greatly appreciate it.

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