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TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO APPEARS LIVE ON HOT 97'S EBRO IN THE MORNING

Ebro Darden: We got Mayor de Blasio on Ebro in the Morning. Mama Stylez's out on maternity leave. You got Rosenberg – de Blasio, good morning, Sir.

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Good morning, Ebro. How you doing today?

Darden: I'm blessed, man. It's cold, the streets are with the ice and the, you know, the aftereffects of the storm, a little bit dangerous, everybody, please slow down, be safe. There's definitely ice. And there's going to be ice out there today, all day and tomorrow. The high is only going up to 31. Got to say, shout out to the Sanitation workers and everybody keeping the streets clean though. Damn good job. How you feel about that, de Blaz?

Mayor: I feel really good. And thank you for – it's so nice when people actually remember what these guys do and the hard work. They've been amazing. [Inaudible] be safe, you're exactly right. Take it slow today.

Darden: All right, de Blaz. Let's get down to business. This scathing report that has been released this morning. You jumped to it, you're up early or at least talking to us early, and put out a video already about this 111-page report. What is this report?

Mayor: Look after the protests in May and June, which was an incredibly challenging, but also very important time for this city, I ordered the Department of Investigation to do an independent report. They are an independent agency. I asked them to go and figure out what had transpired, what we needed to learn from it, what we needed to do better. It came back with a very tough, but I think also very fair report that says we've got to approach things differently going forward. And I accept the recommendations and the NYPD accepts the recommendations. They've pointed out things we have to do better, and I want to own that. And I want to get to that work.

Darden: I want to dig into that. But I also want to dig into kind of you as the manager. You're the CEO of New York City. It is your responsibility to make sure not only that things are functioning right, but we have the money to pay for things and also the accountability of the people that you put in place or that you manage. How are you going to make these sweeping changes? Are you going to entrust this to the NYPD themselves, or is there going to be an outside commission that are going to make sure the NYPD meets this call?

Mayor: It's a combination. It's a very important question, Ebro. I appreciate it. Look, I met with Commissioner Shea, he a hundred percent agrees with me that this report, even though it was critical and there's pieces of it I might say, I look at it a little bit differently, in the end it's a very fair report. It really – they went to incredible lengths to get the facts and be very careful and thoughtful in their analysis. We accept the recommendation. So, it's his responsibility to put them in action in terms of the NYPD with the other leadership. But it's my job to make sure that happens with my colleagues here at City Hall. Also, the Department of Investigation when they do a report, we'll be working with them on the follow-up to make sure it happens. We'll be working with a Civilian Complaint Review Board because their oversight is crucial here. So, I feel, you know, when you have everyone agreeing that something must change and it must change now, and we have the very specific ideas of what changes, that actually makes it a lot easier to move forward, but it's my job to make sure these changes happen.

Darden: So, here's my question – I had Shea on one time, and I got to say that the conversation, it was great for people to hear us exchange, but there's a level of arrogance with him when I pressed him about white supremacy in the NYPD, that he did not want to delve into on the radio. And I asked, you know, I'd love to talk. I don't want to talk to you off the radio, I'm not trying to have a buddy-buddy relationship with the commissioner of the police department. I'd love you to do your job. I pay taxes. I want you to do your job. And then if you don't do your job, I want to hold you accountable. But I don't want to have a sit down and chummy chummy chum. And the reason that is, is because I feel like often these guys, whether it be in the police department or any position of power, they want to chummy chum chum you and be your buddy, so you don't go heavy handed with them when they make errors, and you give them latitude and space to keep screwing up. And the reason I say that to you right now is because you and I over the last, you know, eight years have become cool, but I can't trust the words you're saying without also saying, look, I don't trust those guys to actually make the changes. This report says that there's a trust problem and that this NYPD cannot manage the changes that they need to have happen. So how do we as the public just go, okay, yeah, we believe y'all this time that y'all are actually going to make changes. Look, Monahan, who is the chief of the department or whatever his title is, he's had complaints going all the way back to 2004. I don't even know how he's still in charge.

Mayor: First of all, I want to say your bigger point about it's not that people get along personally, but are we actually getting done what we're supposed to get done, I agree with that. And I want to be real clear, when I say, it's my responsibility, Ebro, I'm not saying that lightly. I'm saying we have here – this is exactly what we have to do to fix things. And it's not new in the sense that this is not like after seven years of doing something totally different. Now we're saying, 'Oh, now we actually have to work on trust.' Come on, it's – we said, when I ran for

office, I said, something is broken in the relationship between the NYPD and community, and the history is bad. And you talk about white supremacy, of course, there is a fundamental history in the NYPD going back generations of institutional racism that is unacceptable.

And the question is not, do you say, hey, we're going to say that history is so dominant we can't do anything about it. No, we took the opinion we have to change that. And that meant a lot of different things. It meant diversifying the police force, which is very clear it is a very different police force than it was years ago. It is now majority of people of color, more and more city residents, more and more women. It meant changing the entire approach. That's why we did neighborhood policing, where you're actually supposed to have police officers stay in a community, get to know people, value them, understand them humanly, feel connected to them. And then all the other changes, ending stop-and-frisk and putting body cameras on, de-escalation training, implicit bias training. So, this report has to be seen in that context.

Here came these protests of a type that had never been seen before. And we tried our best to keep people safe but did not do good enough and have to do something different. And the Department of Investigation said, this is your problem, here's where you are missing the way to connect to people and hear people, and you've got to change the following things. And I agree with it. So, I'm like – you know, sometimes when people say, 'hey, you made a mistake and I'm challenging you to do better.' If you can say, I agree and I will do better and I see it and I own it and I understand what we need to do, that to me, there has to be space in human life for that. And I really – I know we can do it. So, I hear you. It's not about, you know, someone's friends so you've got to give him the benefit of doubt. No, we're saying it out in the open. We're literally publishing all this stuff and saying, this is exactly what happened. And this is exactly what we have to change. And we're committed to it.

Darden: What are the next steps that the public should pay attention to –

Peter Rosenberg: [Inaudible] timeline –

Darden: Walk us through this timeline. Where are the meetings? Who are the people? What should we be looking for?

Mayor: A lot of what is being demanded by the Department of Investigation are things we can do very, very quickly. We have some new leadership. For example, a lot of what happened was governed over, not by the chief of department, but chief of patrol. We have a new Chief of Patrol, Juanita Holmes. She's going to have a very big impact on how we approach things going forward. And she's been very clear, even before this report, that there has to be a different engagement with the community. Highest ranking Black woman in the history of the NYPD, highest ranking woman in the uniformed history of the NYPD. That's the difference. We have a new Chief of Community Affairs, and community affairs is a big piece of this report. The way the community affairs needs to be used better. Chief Jeff Maddrey, who wasn't in that role yet when the protests were happening. But during the protest, really distinguished himself in Brooklyn as being one of the people that listened to the protestors, worked with them, found common ground –

Darden: We've talked to Maddrey before, he seems like a good guy. Shani gives him the thumbs up. So, we cool with him.

Mayor: Yeah, so I mean the new leadership and then putting into effect immediately the training. This is something we started, but we've got to go a lot deeper. The officers who are dealing with protests need to be trained to understand the right way to handle protests, and understand that when it's overwhelmingly peaceful protest, which is what it was, you got to meet and connect with the protesters and what they're trying to do. Even if what they're trying to do is, they're upset with the police and they want changes, you still have to respect that. There has to be a better way to do that. And I think the report shows us that training has to start immediately. So, you will see different leaders, different training, a different approach at the beginning. One of the things that I think came through really clearly here is, separate the very few who meant to do violence. And there clearly was violence and that's not acceptable. There clearly was looting. That's not acceptable. But put aside that, the vast, vast majority of people were peaceful. We've got to engage those folks, not just when a protest is called, but before it, during it, after it. And I think our report makes that clear. And that's going to be the requirement now for leaders like Chief Holmes, Chief Maddrey, and many others.

So, this is something we start right now. And I think it's an everyday thing too. Since the protests, again, we went through a really tough summer, a lot of shootings, a lot of violence on the ground, but one of the things that came clear is having to reconnect deeply through neighborhood policing, that whole approach, working more closely with the Cure Violence movement and the crisis management system. This is something really important in this equation. And I want to give Commissioner Shea, Chief Monahan, Chief Holmes, Chief Maddrey – they all get it. Cure Violence and the crisis management system is a big part of the future of New York City. That if we're going to stop violence in communities, you have to do it with community leadership. NYPD sometimes it's going to be in the front of that. But sometimes they have to take a step back and let community leadership come to the fore. And folks who really understand how to intervene to stop violence. There's more and more commitment to that. So, we got a lot to do, but we can do it. I really feel we can do it –

Darden: How am I supposed to accept that somebody like Monahan, who was at the protest, was out there calling the shots – so these mistakes that are in this report, right, this stuff that's in this report is tied to him. How am I supposed to accept that he's still going to be in his role?

Mayor: Because he is one of the most foundational architects of neighborhood policing and ending what was the era of stop-and-frisk and where police officers cycled through communities and did “vertical patrols” in public housing and dehumanizing strategies where police had no connection to the people they serve. He is one of the people who stopped that, broke that down, changed it, created neighborhood policing. Look, he and I –

Darden: So, you're basically telling me he deserves a pass.

Mayor: No, I'm not saying in the least, Ebro. That's not what I said, come on. He is someone who has proven through his actions that he believes in a different kind of policing and even, look, I'm the first to say that report points out where we missed things and we did it wrong, but I

want to also be clear about the times, many times in those days, when there was de-escalation where police worked with community. And one of the most dramatic moments is on video, Washington Square Park, and Terry Monahan talking to the protesters and saying what happened in Minneapolis was unacceptable, and no one should for a moment, anyone wearing a uniform should accept what happened there, we got to change it. And he took a knee with the protesters out of respect for them. And it was a powerful moment in the midst of a really tough time. I'm not saying one thing is enough. I'm saying that's his heart and he's got to do better. I've got to do better. Dermot's got to do better. Everyone's got to be better, but I'm not going to miss the fact that he has devoted himself to try to turn around the situation and create an actual bond between police and the people in the neighborhoods.

Rosenberg: We talked to Max Rose the other day and he had an interesting thought. I'm curious about your thoughts on it. What do you think about the idea that maybe the police chief or the commissioner shouldn't be a former cop that, that in of itself can create problems?

Mayor: It's a very important question. I thought about this a lot. There are tremendous advantages to having someone totally from the outside. There's no question, but I think there's truly, I made this decision very knowingly over the years when I chose people who had been officers that if you're going to change the internal culture, you're going to really say we're doing something very different now, the legitimacy that officer – former officer brings in talking to folks who do this work, who do put their lives on the line, who do go into incredibly difficult situations like a domestic violence situation and things like that, that are just terrifying for everyone involved, if you're going to say to people, we're changing this culture, we're going to reconnect with communities, we're going to listen more, we're going to work with Cure Violence movement, crisis management system – the legitimacy of having walked the walk is incredibly powerful, but you have to have a leader who truly believes in change and reform. And the people I chose had proven it on the ground. And so, I think in the end, if you can find that leader who wants to move things, someone who's done it can – you know, someone who's done the work can make the change and make the reform a lot more quickly than someone from outside. But if you don't have a leader committed to that, then you have to get someone outside by definition.

Darden: Yeah, I think that's – you know, looking forward, I think that's kind of where my eyes are and my ears are tuned into because of, you know, having worked in organizations since I was 15 years old, corporate organizations, knowing what people say to the public and the teams versus what they do behind the scenes, I've seen it all. And that comradery that exists amongst people who have been on the job or have been a part of a culture for a long time is a thing. And it takes a serious change agent to look at people that they have worked with before that they know their families, they know their children, they've done holidays together before, they know them to say, you are wrong, for the greater good, and I'm going to hold you accountable. And that's why I asked you the question about, is this change going to be managed by an outside entity? Are we supposed to trust that these people who – you know, look, man, they put their lives on the line together, there's a bond there. They suit up every day. There's a bond there that they look at us as the regular folks, as just pedestrians, often, not all of them, but many of them become jaded and hardened in this role for, you know, decades. 25 years on the job, 30 years on the job they become jaded. And so, when you're asking them to make human changes, I don't always

believe that they are capable because of who they become on the job. And that's why you need sometimes people to come in who bring a different energy.

Mayor: Yeah. But, Ebro, I want to say to you, everything you said is fair. I don't want you to leave out of the equation that a mayor is supposed to be that check and balance, and constantly push them to change and make sure they do it. And I have seen the power of that. Remember, I get to choose the police commissioner, I get to keep them or not keep them. I dictate their budget. So, there's tons of ability to say, this is where we have to go. And I have seen with the commissioners that I've had, that they have moved to change agenda. And I want to use this example after the protest, Dermot Shea went on the job in 1991, but he's been someone inside who said, we have to do things differently, his whole career. So here come the protests. We all now know the things that we needed to do better. But in the aftermath of that, he did something that exactly epitomizes what you're talking about, about the fact that someone inside needs to be able to look people in the eye and say, we have to change. And he said, we need to get rid of the anti-crime unit. We need to get rid of an approach that's very, very aggressive, that, yes, is trying to stop violence, but is doing it in a way that often harms the relationship between police and community. And there's a better way to do it.

Now, this was something that a lot of people inside the NYPD disagreed with. And you heard all sorts of commentary, 'Oh, if you got rid of the anti-crime unit, you know, horrible things are going to happen.' But, Dermot, to his credit said, no, this is counterproductive, this is something that we all got used to, but it doesn't work, it's not the right approach, we can find a better approach. And he did it and took a lot of hell for it. So, I want to remind you that when it is someone inside who sees the need for change, and then they say, guys, we've all been through this together, but we cannot keep doing this the same way, it actually has much greater power than someone from the outside sort of talking outside the experience and saying, I know what's right for you. When someone has walked, the walk says, guys, this is wrong, we can't do this anymore. And I really believe this is my heart that that's what Shea has done, that's what Monahan has done with neighborhood policing, that's the way forward, but we've got to hold their feet to the fire. And that's why, what I do as mayor matters, what the Department of Investigation does, what the Civilian Complaint Review Board does. We will make these changes.

We have to make these changes in the city. And I think we've learned something here. And you know, there's also a power of saying sometimes in life, you need to learn. You know, if you're stuck, Chirlane always talks about this, if you are stuck, if you can't learn anymore, hang it up. But I can tell you, you know, May and June were really tough. They were, in some ways, you know, like nothing we've experienced before, but I have learned, I know a lot of people learned, and this – it's like someone said to you, hey, you know what, I'm going to tell you without any kind of, it's not personal and I don't have a horse in this race, but I'm going to look at what you did and help you understand where you need to learn, where you need to evolve? And that's what this report did for me. It helped me see, okay, I missed some things, I need to do it better. But it also gives me the energy to do it better.

Darden: So, I'm sure we're going to have more conversations next year. I appreciate you coming on this morning and taking accountability in front of the whole city and talking about this

subject. I want to reiterate, because people will try to remix history, they love to remix history, May and June, our courts weren't functioning correctly, which you talked about back then. People try to point to the changes in the NYPD as the reason we were having problems in the streets, but there were other things at play. And so, I think there's a –

Mayor: A little pandemic going on –

Darden: You may have heard of it. But I just want to make sure that we continue to – because in this next election cycle next year, people are going to point back to the shooting numbers and the things from this past summer, as a reason to take a more conservative approach to whom we potentially are going to vote for in the upcoming year. People are going to use – they're going to gloss over the pandemic and act like the economy in New York City was your fault. So, it's going to be important for many of us to stay on message, because there's going to be a lot of conservative dollars spent in trying to go back to an old way of policing. And I know you like the people you have in play right now in the NYPD. You just stuck up for Monahan and Shea and etcetera, etcetera. But I can't help but believe since they're from that old guard that they kind of like the way things used to be too. I'm not – I can't say that I'm sold. I'm open to wait and see, but it's hard for me to believe that.

Mayor: You're talking about Dermot, you're talking about Terry. I understand that, Ebro. And that's very honest to say, hey, someone's been part of something for a long time, they have to prove to me a lot more they're going to make a change. That's actually a call to arms in a good way. That is like a, prove to me you're real, prove to me you are continuing to evolve and move things. I think that's a good challenge. I'm glad you issue that challenge.

Darden: Yeah, prove me wrong, prove me wrong.

Mayor: No, I think that's right. But I wanted to – I think your previous point is incredibly powerful. I want to warn all your listeners right now. I guarantee what you just said, Ebro. You are going to hear in this election for mayor, 'we need to go back.' You're going to hear everything from – you know, you even have people saying, we should go back to stop-and-frisk. There are still people out there saying, you know, look all this crime, we should do stop-and –

Darden: They're called racists. And they don't care that Black and brown men specifically are out here just getting patted down and treated like garbage.

Mayor: Correct. And you're going to hear that. And you're going to hear, bring back the anti-crime unit. You're going to hear all sorts of stuff that is retrograde, that is backwards, that's going to hurt us. And people are going to try and sell it saying, if we don't deal with these problems, New York City will never come back, New York City's over. All this madness. Listen, in the end, the only way forward for New York City is to deepen these reforms. We are not done. There's going to be more reform next year. I guarantee that. We need more reform, more progressive action to keep bringing police and community together. That's our future. And Ebro, I warn you also on the economic front, you're going to hear people say, we need wealthy people to stay in New York City, don't raise their taxes, you know, we need to be nicer to them, we need to beg the business community. You're going to hear everyone using the pandemic as the excuse

to go backwards. And, 'look at what things were like when Michael Bloomberg was here, it was all about the business community, and let's go back to having a businessman in charge.' You're going to hear all this stuff again.

The fact is, if we, God damn, if you think back to what things were like before this administration, when it was stop-and-frisk, and arrest everyone you can arrest. You know, remember Bratton and Jimmy O'Neill and Dermot Shea and Terry Monahan governed over constant reduction in arrest and constant reduction in incarceration. Whatever culture they may have come out of, they said constantly, you cannot arrest your way out of these problems, we've got to change at the grass roots. And so, I'm saying to you, reform has to be like a constant. You're going to hear voices say, go backwards. I say, go forward. So, I'd say more reform, more respect for community, more reliance on Cure Violence and a crisis management system, deepen neighborhood policing, don't abandon it, deepen it. But watch what you just prophesied is going to happen, Ebro. You're going to hear people try and make the best case in the world for it. Status quo, status quo plus, plus, plus. They're going to tell you the good old days [inaudible] and as Chirlane always says to me, there were no good old days for a lot of us. We only have to go forward.

Darden: Well, listen. The way forward is never backwards. Mayor de Blasio, thank you for your time this morning.

Rosenberg: Thank you, Mayor.

Darden: And we'll be having more of this dialogue. This report that's been published for people to go read it, where can it be found?

Mayor: They can go on the City website, nyc.gov, and Department of Investigation report, we'll make sure it's up there real clear. And my response to the video I put out today, that's there as well and on all my communications. So, we're going to spread that out today. And I want people to look at the video I did because I really try to express from the heart what I felt when I read this report and what I knew I had to do better going forward. And I really want people to see it.

Darden: I want to frame something too, for people tuned in, maybe from other media outlets, etcetera, etcetera. It is, you know, at least it's not lost on me, de Blasio, the fact that you decided to come to the station that speaks to the most Black and brown men in the city, to talk about the NYPD making changes because we are the ones under attack. And so, it's not lost on me that you recognize the location you need to come. You didn't run up to – you know, look no disrespect to everyone else, y'all just don't have as much Black and brown people listening to y'all like we do. And I appreciate you coming by this, the show today and having this convo.

Mayor: Thank you very much, Ebro. And look, one last thing I'd say, in the video I did, I talked about this moment, not just for the country, the pandemic, but I also meant it is a season, it's a season that's supposed to help us get into our hearts and think differently and reflect. A season of reflection. There's a lot of values of redemption in this time. So, we're about to get out of 2020. thank God. 2021 needs to be something very, very different. And I feel that in my heart. So, I'm just asking everyone, of course I want people to feel the spirit of the holidays, I want everyone to

know, you know, something different is coming. Something better is coming. We all have that opportunity together. There's a lot of pain, but there's also a lot of opportunity to make change and real happy holidays, Merry Christmas, Happy Kwanzaa.

Darden: Yeah, Kwanzaa –

Mayor: You know, Happy New Year, Happy Three Kings Day in advance. And let's celebrate and then we've got something we can do together that actually can really move us to a better place.

Darden: You need a giant kinara right in Times Square for Kwanzaa. It's never happened before. You know, you get – you see menorahs all over the place, which salute Hanukkah, trees everywhere. It's time to get the Kwanzaa movement going. We need a kinara out there. You know what I mean? So, we could get our Kujichagulia on.

Mayor: I had to learn how to say, Kujichagulia. And it took me a while. That was the first Kwanzaa I ever experienced was when I first met Chirlane and she took me home to her family.

Darden: There you go.

Mayor: And I was, you know, really trying to figure out how to make it work. And Kwanzaa's beautiful. Kwanzaa is something everyone should experience if they haven't. So, I'm going to take up that challenge, Ebro.

Darden: Let's go.

Mayor: We're going to teach all of New York City to say, Kujichagulia.

Darden: There you go. [inaudible] –

Rosenberg: We're talking a lot of Kwanzaa and Christmas, but this is definitely a Jewish goodbye. So, all right, Mayor –

[Laughter]

Mayor: Happy Hanukkah, Rosenberg.

Rosenberg: Thanks, Mayor.

Mayor: Take care.

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