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**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO DELIVERS REMARKS AT THE NATIONAL
ACTION NETWORK 2018 CONVENTION**

Mayor Bill de Blasio: This is a wonderful time for everyone here to be gathering because this is a powerful moment in our history and I have to tell you a constant, no matter whether times are good or bad, or the struggles are easier or harder, a constant has been the National Action Network. You should be very proud of that fact.

[Applause]

One of the things I deeply appreciate about Reverend Sharpton and Doctor Richardson and all of the leadership of this organization is the idea that people need to be organized, everywhere, all the time. That's what NAN has done – everywhere, all the time. I remember when this was a brand new organization, Reverend, and it has grown I think beyond everyone's wildest expectations. I want to thank Reverend Sharpton for continuing to be a voice a conscious, for continuing to remind us, this is also all about his roots in Dr. King's movement, to remind us that if we reach people, if we organize people, if we show them what's possible, the world can change. He has never lost that faith and Reverend thank you for that.

[Applause]

This is an extraordinary group of leaders here who are making a difference in this city, in this state, in our neighboring state, and all over the country, and I especially appreciate our former Attorney General because he is trying to bring fairness to our election process.

[Applause]

And I have to say one other acknowledgment, because, I'll tell you, it is a challenge to be a mayor during the Trump administration, and I want to give some credit where credit is due to my brother from Newark, Ras Baraka, who is doing an outstanding job, outstanding.

[Applause]

So look, I'm going to be very quick, but I want to make a fundamental point here. It is a powerful moment in history not because of the negatives. We know all about the negatives, we know all about the reasons to be upset, to be discouraged, we are seeing things everyday on the news we never thought possible. Right? We have seen norms that we use to cherish, torn up, tweet after tweet.

[Laughter]

A notion of dignity is way back in the rear view mirror but that should not confuse us, the fact the occupant in the White House, or the result of a particular election because of the perverse nature of the Electoral College, those things should not confuse us or dissuade us from action. I'm going to argue very quickly that we actually should see this moment as a time for tremendous possibility. And we are the ones lucky enough to live in this time.

[Applause]

You know, the night before we mourned the loss of Dr. King and we celebrated his life 50 years after his assassination and we remembered what he meant to us, that night before, here in New York City, we wanted to do something powerful and meaningful to appreciate that moment.

Reverend Sharpton joined us and we're in Washington Square, in Greenwich Village, we have the beautiful arch there, we lit up the arch with an image of Dr. King, and we replayed the last speech of his life. That night before he was assassinated, remember as we know he was in Memphis to organize working people for change, to stand up for people who were being treated unfairly, and he was connecting all the dots in one of the most powerful and profound ways. He was fighting against income inequality and poverty while he was fighting against an unjust war, while he was fighting for civil rights. He understood that they all went together.

And the night he gave the speech, and most of us have heard a few lines from that speech, where it was almost prophetic his understanding he would not be with us longer but his satisfaction at what he had helped to spark and all the people who had joined along with him in a movement for change. That whole speech bears listening and in the beginning of the speech, he sets the stage powerfully by talking about all of the renowned errors of history, and imagines what if he had a chance to live in any of those great times, with great leaders, and great changes, which would he have chosen. And he walks through history, but concludes he would have lived in that moment he was in 1968 because it was a time ripe for change. Brothers and sisters we are living, now, in that time ripe for change.

[Applause]

And I want us, even when we turn on the television news, do not be discouraged. Even when you go online, do not be afraid because something deeper and bigger is going on here. It has been brewing for the last few years but now it has all come out in the open. Remember how for years and years in this country, you could not get a conversation started about the horror of mass incarceration. But a movement over the last few years changed that. It is now on the front burner, it's in all of our consciousness, and it's starting to change, and I'm very proud to say, in this city,

I've said it before, the era of mass incarceration did not begin in New York City, but it will end in New York City when we close Rikers Island for good.

[Applause]

You used to not be able to have a full and blunt and honest conversation about the relationship between our police and our community. But that is changing all over this country and NAN has been a crucial part of that. And I want to remind you in this city, in this city, when we got rid of a broken policy of stop-and-frisk, when we created neighborhood policing, when we brought police and community together, we got safer. We got safer by being fairer.

[Applause]

But you used to not have an honest discussion. That is happening now and people are organizing like never before. We could not believe for a long time there could actually be change when it came to fighting for gun safety. It looked like the NRA just had everything locked down until those brave students from Parkland, Florida told us, they showed us that change was possible, that people could be organized all over this country.

[Applause]

Students in all 50 states. Rev, you have to go back to the time when you were a young man and people were organizing in the Civil Rights Movement to see high school students doing something so powerful. Doesn't that augur well for all of us and for this moment of change?

[Applause]

Women organizing like never before – the greatest protest in the history of the United States in the wake of Donald Trump's inauguration, all 50 states. You see how these dots are starting to connect? How about when it comes to elections? How about the state of Alabama?

[Applause]

There was more voter suppression there than you could possibly imagine but people voted anyway and they changed the world. Connect all these dots and something amazing is happening. By the way, God bless the teachers all over this country who are saying enough is enough –

[Applause]

And standing up in red states and forcing a change. So, I conclude with this and I don't mean this to be an overstatement because I feel it in my heart. We're living through a time of miracles.

[Applause]

Things are happening that were not supposed to be possible. It wasn't possible to win that Senate seat in Alabama. It wasn't possible for those teachers to get fairness. It wasn't possible for high school students to organize in all 50 states but it all just happened and it happened in a matter of months. Months not years not decades. So, my friends, let's meet the moment and there is no organization in America better poised to meet the moment than the National Action Network.

[Applause]

Someday we will look back at this time and we will cherish the fact that we were part of these big changes and history will show that you were the authors of the progress and the change and the better country for all. Thank you. God bless you all.

[Applause]

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