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**RUSH TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO DELIVERS REMARKS AT DEDICATION CEREMONY
AND RIBBON-CUTTING AT WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART**

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Thank you so much, Adam. Adam is – quite evidently for all who know his work and all who know him personally – he falls into that special category – force of nature. And I think we have seen it in this lead up to this great moment. So I think you don't get to a day like this without extraordinary energy, and focus, and leadership. Let's thank Adam for all he has done.

[Applause]

This is an extraordinary day for New York City, for this nation, for the world of the arts. This is a signal moment about where we are and where we're trying to go. And you know something important is happening when First Lady Michelle Obama is there. And so, First Lady – first of all, you've made all of our day by being a part of this. Even jaded New Yorkers think its special when Michelle Obama is present.

[Applause]

And First Lady, what I appreciate among many things about what you've done for our nation is you have made clear we have to think about the development of our people, particularly our young people; their development; their emotional development; their health – not just physically, but their mental health as well, which you've focused on and we thank you for that; their understanding of a true wellness throughout their lives, and that includes a deep appreciation of the arts and culture and a sense of connection to it. So, our first lady understands that arts are essential to human growth and development and that makes us a better nation. Let's thank her.

[Applause]

But I'm not done being star-struck – Renzo Piano. Renzo Piano.

[Applause]

If, in all the different action movies, there was an architect superhero – first of all, he would do the things that Renzo Piano does. Second of all, his name would inevitably be Renzo Piano.

[Laughter]

This man has done so much around the world to create that space for everyone. And his work pulls at us in such a good way. It makes us feel hope and possibility. And so I just want to say, as a New Yorker, I am so proud. As an Italian-American, I'm so proud. And Renzo, you bring out the best in Italians. We like being associated with you.

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Italian]

Thank you to all the great leaders of this institution, who worked so hard, did so much to bring in the resources and support to navigate everything it took. And we should thank them all – Board of Trustees President Neil Blumh, Co-Chair Bob Hurst, and Co-Chair Brooke Garber Neidich. We thank you deeply.

[Applause]

We thank all of the elected officials. We thank all the members of our administration who are a part of this. This is a labor of love for everyone. Everyone has helped to make it happen. But I think we can safely say a special thank you because it's wonderful when a family from generation to generation passes the torch in the service of others and believes in something so deeply as providing this extraordinary cultural opportunity to all. Flora, you – you are part of a great tradition. You're upholding it. You're deepening it. The next generation is taking it up, and that makes us all feel hope. Let's thank Flora.

[Applause]

Well, we already knew we were the mecca of the art world. But just in case we needed to make it clearer, this museum does it. And as New Yorkers, we are extraordinarily proud. We're proud that people from around the world come to experience our cultural life. 56 million-plus last year came to this city, and the vast majority of them came in part, at least, to experience out extraordinary cultural institutions.

I particularly love that this museum's origins are in something so powerfully typical of our city. Think about Greenwich Village – 1907 – ideas being thought far from the mainstream, far over the horizon. And in New York City, one thing we are blessed by is if you think that way, if you see something that's not in the mainstream and isn't yet accepted, here you'll find others who want to join that dream, who want to believe with you, who want to create something different. This dream began in 1907 with Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney, and has grown, and grown, and grown just as freedom of thought, and cultural expression, and inclusion of all peoples have grown, and grown in this city. Extraordinary artists who are elevated here – now part of what we think of the core of American cultural history – once upon a time, outcasts. Once upon a time, unable to get a wider audience until they had this opportunity. And The Whitney today follows through on that belief structure in many other ways – makes culture available to so many in such a focused, pin-pointed manner; brings in young people; focuses on so many young people who still to this day experience discrimination and negativity. There's a special focus on mentoring our LGBT youth. There's free workshops for our seniors as well. There's focus on adults with HIV and AIDS. So much happens through The Whitney to uplift. And yes, a focus on the students in our public schools from every walk of life, every background – this museum has made it a point to be an open door to them.

We last week talked about the vision for the future of the city. We issued a plan looking decades ahead. We called it One New York. We called it One New York because we're still trying to create a more perfect union here, and the cultural community is, and can be, in the forefront of that. We know when the doors of our cultural institutions are open wider and wider to every kind of New Yorker, when everyone knows they belong here it uplifts this entire city. We know that walking through the doors of a great place like this into the *piazza* gives people a sense of belonging, and gives them a pathway to a different and better future.

So, I can tell you for New York City today this affirms who we are and makes us one step closer to that more perfect union. Thank you all.

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