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TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO APPEARS ON INSIDE CITY HALL

Errol Louis: Welcome back to Inside City Hall. Following the deadly shooting of a 10-year-old boy in Queens over the weekend, the conversation around crime and gun violence is front and center once again in our city. Mayor de Blasio visited the grieving family yesterday and promised to bring the killer to justice. The Mayor joins me now from the Blue Room inside City Hall to talk about that and much more. Welcome, Mr. Mayor. Good to see you.

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Thank you, Errol. How are you doing tonight?

Louis: Okay. Okay. In a lot of pain, like a lot of New Yorkers. Are there any developments in that shooting death of Justin Wallace? This was just three days before his 11th birthday.

Mayor: It's horrible. It's horrible. Errol, we've spoken to each other about being parents and I sat in their home and heard the parents just tell stories and then they'd break down crying. And then they'd talk again, you know, as if he almost was still alive. And it, you know, it was so painful. The killer just shot randomly into the house. It's disgusting. And there is video, there's a high degree of confidence in the NYPD that this individual will be brought to justice and soon. We do not have a specific new development for you, but I think there's going to be a lot of people helping us. And I really do want to appeal to the public to help with any information so we can bring the killer to justice.

Louis: As far as you know are the reports accurate that it was – the genesis of it was a fight over a shared driveway or parking spot?

Mayor: That's not confirmed at this moment. There may be more to it than that. So, I don't want to – I don't want to assume that. But we do need again, we need any, and all information people have. The thing that's different now, and Errol, you've watched these patterns for years. Once upon a time, sometimes someone committed a crime and got away or got out of the city and couldn't be found. Today, particularly with the preponderance of video and better technique, pretty much everyone is found and found pretty quickly. So, given the pain here, and I know neighborhood residents are not going to tolerate this, if they have information, they're going to share it. We're going to find this person.

Louis: And I assume there's a reward available for this?

Mayor: As always. Absolutely.

Louis: Okay. Whoever knows who that killer was, you might as well turn him in, he's going to be found. And maybe you could speed up the process a little bit and get some money in the process. So, Mr. Mayor, this doesn't seem like the kind of thing that cops on patrol could necessarily anticipate or head off. I mean, other than randomly, if they happen to be patrolling nearby. It doesn't seem either, even like the kind of thing that a violence interrupter could have anticipated. What are we to think of the ability of your administration to keep people safe in these circumstances?

Mayor: Errol, look, we have to use every tool. You know, last night after we visited with the family, Borough President Donovan Richards and I spoke to the media and what he said was sort of the most foundational thing – that the number one poison is the guns that have flowed into the city, of course, for years. But as you know, nationally the amount of guns flowing since the pandemic began has gotten even worse. That's not the excuse, but it is the foundation. We need actual gun control laws that stop the flow of guns into New York City. We need help from the federal government. We need help from the State government. Today, I called for parole reform that really could tangibly help to ensure that those coming back from incarceration get support, get housing, get jobs, get discharge planning to keep them from returning to a life of crime from being either victims or perpetrators of more violent crime. So, these are parts of the solution, but you're making a really good point, Errol. Violence interrupters can really be profoundly high-impact in some settings. Officer on the beat, there's nothing more effective than that. But you can't be everywhere. I think it's an all the above strategy. Reduce the flow of guns, get guns off the streets. NYPD has been doing that on a record level. Get the relationship with the community to be strong again, through neighborhood policing. Chief Rodney Harrison always talks about this, our Chief of Department. We need witnesses. We need people to come forward with tips. That depends on having those human relationships. So, we've got more work to do there, and there's some issues there in Albany as well on the law that we need some help with going forward. So, Errol the truth is all of these things have to come together to really turn the tide.

Louis: Okay. So yeah, let's talk a little bit about parole reform. It wouldn't necessarily have prevented this particular case. We won't know until we actually have a suspect and find out more about it. But it is certainly worth doing. Routinely parolees and for viewers who don't understand how this works, when you finish a prison sentence, you normally will come out on parole. In many cases, the State is sending people to homeless shelters here in the city. They're sent without adequate resources or planning, and they're basically set up to fail. What would be in the laws that you're supporting that might turn that process around?

Mayor: Errol, you said it exactly right. And think about this, and the facts are proving that parolees are more likely than ever before to be victims of gun violence or perpetrators of gun violence, because they're not being connected to a different and better life. Too many of them are resuming the exact horrible cycles they ended up in. And we had members of the Assembly today join us for my press conference. And they talked about their own communities and that vicious cycle that has to be broken. The fact is that at the City level, unlike the previous administration we added education and training five days a week for inmates in Rikers. We added discharge planning early and intensely. We added transitional jobs. Folks were guaranteed a 90-day transitional job so they had a chance coming out, get on their feet, get to a longer-term job. The State doesn't do those things. So, we've gotten great support particularly in the

Assembly for the notion that this could really help to provide a foundation for success instead of failure. You're right. The current program, the current reality at the State level with their correction system is a formula for failure. Instead, why don't we actually support the person coming out? Give them some possibility of getting on their feet, give them an actual realistic, positive option. That's going to draw them away from crime and violence. It can be done. We've proven it here. It's been proven around the country. We need the Legislature to act this week. The bill is on the table. This could really make a difference for New York City.

Louis: Yeah. The frustrating thing is from the day that a person is incarcerated, pretty much everybody knows more or less when they're going to be coming home, so that the discharge planning could literally begin the day before the day – the day that somebody begins their sentence. And yet it's done at the conclusion, it's rushed, it's inadequate. It's under resourced. Mr. Mayor, have you spoken with the Speaker of the Assembly about this, the Majority Leader or the Governor? Those of course are the three people who ultimately have more to do with the passage of legislation than anybody else.

Mayor: I've spoken to Speaker Heastie, Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins, and number of members of the Assembly and Senate. What I've heard is a lot of embrace of the idea that we need to address the public safety challenges we're facing right now. Everyone's saying in their district, they're seeing the impact of gun violence. Certainly, the leaders are hearing from their members. Gun violence is plaguing their districts. But also, what we're hearing from members of the Legislature is they want solutions that are about changing the human dynamic. They want solutions that are about actually providing some opportunity for redemption, not simply dumping prisoners into homeless shelters like you described. That's happening all the time. That's not a policy, that's not an effort to actually help people. So, I've found a lot of great response from legislators because they want a constructive solution. And they want to keep building both criminal justice reform, but tools that help us keep the public safe. This one actually does both.

Louis: Okay. We will keep watching that particular piece of legislation. Standby, Mr. Mayor, we're going to take a short break. We've got a lot more to talk about with the Mayor. We'll do that in just a minute. Stay with us.

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Louis: Welcome back to Inside City Hall, where we are speaking with Mayor de Blasio. He joins us from the Blue Room. And Mr. Mayor, I want to ask you about a story that's just emerging. We have a little bit of information on it. There's reporting that your Law Department, the city's Law Department, was hacked and that investigators are looking into what information may have been revealed. What can you tell us about that?

Mayor: So, there was an attempt for sure, Errol. We're still tracking down exactly who was behind it. Our City, it has a very strong cyber defense. Our Cyber Command is based on taking the lessons we've learned nationally, public sector, private sector, very experienced operatives in that part of the City government who are focusing on defending City interests constantly. From what I know at this moment, investigation underway, but at this moment, no information has been compromised that we know of, nor an attempt to achieve a ransom. Now, this is an

emerging situation, Errol, so, we'll have more to say as we get more information, but so far, we believe the defenses have held and the Law Department information was not compromised.

Louis: And is it DCAS or is it DoITT that runs the computer system for the Law Department?

Mayor: They computer system, agencies have their own systems coordinated through DoITT, through our City IT department, but Cyber Command is a stand-alone defense entity within the City government that crosses all of the agencies.

Louis: Okay. So, your new Corporation Counsel off to a busy first week, I guess.

Mayor: Yes, indeed.

Louis: Well, let me ask you about what happened in Washington Square Park. There was a 10:00 PM curfew. There were some scenes of people being removed, I think a couple of dozen arrests. Whose decision was it to impose a 10:00 PM curfew as opposed to, you know, midnight or one o'clock or two o'clock or some other time?

Mayor: This was an idea that came from local police leadership, but I affirmed it. I think – I know Washington Square Park real well. I went to NYU, I spent years in and around the park. Of late there've been some real challenges and the concerns about noise, potential violence, and what the local leadership said was, look, we think it's good to be proactive, have a set curfew that will allow us – as you know, with many, many parks, there's a time, there's a closing time. This one was on purpose to sort of disrupt some patterns that had been a problem. I'm very hopeful this'll be something only needed for a short period of time. But I think we've seen some things obviously in the last year when situations got a little more advanced, they were much harder to address. I think handling them proactively is smarter for everyone involved actually.

Louis: As you know, I guess even from your time in and around the park, there's a difference between people who were being disorderly, you know, drug use and so forth, and those who were just kind of hanging out. Is there a way to deal with the actual problem and the source of complaints without punishing everybody else who's just there trying to enjoy the park?

Mayor: Yeah, it's a real issue. Obviously, Errol, look, our goal is to get to a situation where people can peacefully enjoy it as late as appropriate. Still a residential neighborhood, as you know, we got to strike a balance. But look, we saw a pattern of some larger gatherings that were getting to be a bit of a problem. You know, some contentiousness, even when people are asked to shut down or people are amplifying music and noise and being asked not to, and they weren't paying attention to that instruction. You know, if folks will listen to the Parks Department, listen to the police department, we don't need to have some of these rules, but when there's not a willingness to follow the rules, we got to set a clear line. So, this is what we're doing for now. As I said, hopefully it settles the situation. It's not something we have to do for long.

Louis: Okay. Let's talk politics. Andrew Yang, candidate for mayor, says that you have been making phone calls, urging unions and others to support Eric Adams. I'm wondering if that is true.

Mayor: Andrew Yang has not joined my conversations to the best of my knowledge. I've had a lot of conversations from months and months with union leaders, political figures in New York City, people comparing notes, observing different ideas about the candidates. Obviously, everyone's making their own decisions. So, I just want to be clear, if I have something to say about the candidates, if I take a formal position, you'll hear about it, but to date I have not.

Louis: The question comes up in part because there was a group, NYCLASS, that had been a supporter of yours back in 2013, that is now putting out a pretty harsh attack ad against Andrew Yang. And I guess the supposition is that if they're close to – if they were close to you then, they're close to you now, and that this is okay with you.

Mayor: Well, that's a lot of supposition right there. Look, I had no conversations with the group about what they were doing. I know them and respect the work they do, but they made that choice very much on their own. And really the issue now for Andrew Yang and all the candidates is to better define themselves and give us a sense of where they want to take this city. This election, Errol, you and I have seen a lot of elections in this town. It's really developing late, of course, because of COVID took away people's attention, because it's June, not a September primary. And a lot of people still aren't used to that because ranked choice is an element of confusion for a lot of people. But really, you know, and I felt this after the last debate, the candidates have got to provide a sharper, clearer understanding for all of us of where they want to take us and why they can get us there. I think this has been a little underwhelming and there's still two weeks ahead, and this is really when people are finally paying attention. So, if I were the candidates, I wouldn't complain about different groups putting up ads. I would try and sharpen up my own game.

Louis: Yeah. Are you planning to do early voting starting this weekend?

Mayor: I'm going to decide that. I'm not sure yet whether I want to do early voting or day-of. It's obviously an important moment for the whole city. It's also, you know, a turning-the-page-moment for me, thinking back eight years ago when I had the privilege of first winning this seat. So, I'm going to decide that soon.

Louis: You are going to also have something like a six-month transition after we know who the winner of the Democratic nomination is.

Mayor: It's a weird mix on the one level, when you say that statement, Errol, of course, everyone paying attention can understand it because as much as any point in New York history, the Democrat is likely to win maybe more than almost any point in history. That said you cannot count your chickens in this work we do before they're hatched. So, there's a general election in November. It's true. The Democratic nominee will have an ability to think a little differently than what I had, for example, after a tough September primary. And we were preparing for a runoff that never came. We had less time. But you can't do a formal transition until the people have made their formal decisions.

Louis: So, to sharpen that question a little bit – do you expect to start on transition-type activities before November?

Mayor: Again, I wouldn't say the ultimate formal type of activities. I don't think they can, you know, appropriately happen until there's a final decision by the people. Can informal discussions begin? Of course, but formal transition – you've got to actually have the election in the end, and any number of things can happen. You and I have seen it plenty of times before. Nothing's over 'til it's over.

Louis: True. Very, very true. Very true.

Mayor: Not until the people speak.

Louis: Absolutely. Before I let you go, you're – you've talked about a big extravaganza, a Central Park concert. Go ahead and sell us on this. Why should we put up with the inevitable traffic and hassle, and what else do you plan to do during this festival week?

Mayor: Look, this is going to be amazing. So, it's going to be New York Homecoming Week. It's going to be a moment to celebrate the rebirth of New York City in August in Central Park on the Great Lawn. We'll be announcing the details soon. Why should you care? Because it's about bringing New York City back. It's going to be one of those moments that truly epitomizes our comeback. We're asking New Yorkers during the Homecoming Week, come out, get involved in the community, support your community. Artists will be out, musicians will be out. This is going to be one of the best Central Park concert lineups in history. I guarantee you. But it's not the only thing we're doing. There's going to be music and activities all over the five boroughs. It's going to be literally a once in a lifetime event. But what makes it special is, it is one of the great moments of New York City, back on our feet, strong for our future. And every New Yorker should be a part of it.

Louis: Okay. Please bring lots of water. Thanks very much. We will see you next week.

Mayor: Thank you, Errol.

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