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TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO HOLDS MEDIA AVAILABILITY

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Well, good morning, everybody. We are now toward the end of the first week of phase three of our restart. And, so far, New Yorkers are doing a great job. Phase three is going really well, as have phase one and two. This city is devoted to coming back, but coming back the right way. And I want to thank everyone for the hard work. It's not easy, but you're doing things the right way, and it shows, and you'll see it again today when we go over our health indicators in a few minutes. But let's talk about something that's not going so right, and I always like to be blunt with people about the challenges we face. In the last few weeks, a big challenge in this city, and that's gun violence. We have seen some really tough weekends, particularly last weekend. And particularly in Harlem, we saw way too much violence, and it's not something that's acceptable in the city. We cannot have people live in fear. We cannot have our young people in the crosshairs. It's not something we will allow in this city. We have to do better, and this weekend coming up has to be better, particularly in Harlem, where we're focusing a lot of our efforts to change the reality on the ground.

Now, you're going to hear in a moment from two key leaders who have been leading this effort on the ground in Harlem, State Senator Brian Benjamin, and Iesha Sekou, the CEO of Street Corner Resources. We gathered together with 50 leaders from the Harlem community, with the top officials of the NYPD, with members of my administration, to think about a new grassroots approach to addressing this problem. Everyone agreed on a common vision, working together. And it requires not just police resources, it requires community leadership, the active involvement of clergy, community-based organizations, the Cure Violence movement, Crisis Management System – all of these pieces need to come together with a vision for turning things around on the ground in Harlem. And it's particularly important to reach our young people who have gone through so much in these last months, to reconnect with them, to give them positive options, to engage them, to hear them. So, we will take back our streets in Harlem and all over our city, but we're going to do it from the ground up. We're going to do it with community leadership.

Now, starting tonight, you're going to see a combination of things happening. Yes, of course, increased NYPD presence at hotspots, at key locations, more patrol officers on foot, in vehicles, but also more community presence, because that is the key to this. Community leaders, community organizations, walking with police officers, showing common cause. The crucial role of the Cure Violence movement and the Crisis Management System doing what they do so well, engaging people, figuring out where conflicts may be, mediating, stopping violence before it even happens – engaging young people in a powerful way. Our clergy leaders have been clear, faith leaders, that they're going to actively bring their houses of worship into this, opening up the doors for young people to come in, to meet, to be heard. We're going to have the Parks Department involved, working with community groups, working with the NYPD to put on a host

of activities over this weekend and beyond to give young people positive alternatives. We're going to have a youth town hall next Friday in Harlem to make sure the voices of young people and their needs are heard. And then a larger effort – a take-back-the-block effort over the coming weeks – grassroots, anti-violence effort based on very successful models from recent years of community members, making very clear that their blocks, their community belongs to them and it needs to be a safe place. So, we will break the cycle of violence. We'll stop some of the retaliation that we've seen that has fueled this cycle of violence, and we'll do it again. The best way anything ever changes, the only way you see profound change – from the grassroots up. And leading this effort to remarkable leaders of and by and for the community. First, want to introduce the man who brought us all together on that conference call to plot a common strategy and come up with a common vision. I thank him for the extraordinarily constructive, focused work he does every single day – State Senator Brian Benjamin.

[...]

Thank you so much, Senator. And what a perfect segue to Iesha Sekou, who has done remarkable work for years as a real leader citywide of the Cure Violence movement and the Crisis Management system. But she has done the legendary work in Harlem reaching our young people. And Iesha was also one of the folks who inspired the creation of the Black Lives Matter murals all over New York City that started at a meeting we had at Gracie Mansion a few weeks ago, and was with us yesterday in front of Trump Tower. But most importantly, brought a lot of the young people from the community to that historic moment, and I really thank you for that. I think that was the most powerful piece of it to me, to have young people there creating that history. So, my great pleasure to introduce the CEO of Street Corner Resources, Iesha Sekou.

[...]

Thank you, Iesha. And look, everyone, I want to make clear, I think the people in New York City are only just beginning to understand the power of this movement, the Cure Violence movement, the Crisis Management System. But again, it is community people reaching young people in particular, mediating, stopping violence before it happens, really creating the kind of dialogue and support, the mental health support, the things that change the foundational reality. And Iesha made such an important point, no one wants to be caught in a cycle of violence. People need help to break out of it when it exists and that's what the Cure Violence movement, the Crisis Management System does. The other point, the occupy the corner concept, this is something that has existed for years and years. I remember participating five, 10 or more years ago with the National Action Network on occupy the corner efforts. This is a people's response to violence and the people saying that this is our community and we will not allow violence in our own community, and that is the single most powerful response. So, this is a strategy that has worked in the past, and we're going to use it again now in Harlem, and then go far beyond Harlem to other communities as well.

Now, Iesha mentioned the extraordinary moment yesterday and it was very, very moving for all of us, because – I just want to say this personally, I think all of us have gone through such a difficult journey these last four months, and in a different way we've gone through a very difficult journey in this nation over the last three or four years, where the notion of love, the notion of healing, the notion of mutual respect seems to be torn apart in so many ways. And yesterday, to me, was a response to that, a response to the notion that the most powerful voices

and platforms in this land have turned to hatred, not to peace and respect and love. And it was important to not just have the Black Lives Matter murals in other parts of the city, other crucial locations, which have also been very emotional and powerful, but this one had a particular meaning, because we had to send a message to the seat of power. We have to send a message to the President of the United States that Black lives matter and he cannot do anything to stop that. That all of the hatred that he propagates, all the efforts that he has created to try and take us backwards – they just won't work. It's too late, we're moving forward. And that's the hopeful, positive message of Black Lives Matter. It is a message that systemic racism and a past that must be reckoned with, but it is not a message to me, a hopeless message – it is a positive, forward-looking message of righting a wrong and creating a true respect for people's value. And when the President tweeted a few days ago that this mural – look at it, it's beautiful, it's powerful, it's meaningful, but he said that mural would “denigrate the luxury of Fifth Avenue.” That was one of the purest statements of racism I've ever heard, and the last place you'd want to hear that statement of racism is from the person who's supposed to represent all of us. But, in fact, I think that mural liberates Fifth Avenue. I think that mural ennobles Fifth Avenue. I think it enlightens Fifth Avenue to have those words that really suggest what America was supposed to be about all along, but never was; that really talks about equality and valuing each human being. Those were supposed to be our founding principles. They were not realized. Now, we're saying we must realize them.

So, that's what New York City is saying. I want to thank everyone who helped, including that group of Gracie Mansion, Iesha, and so many others who were with me yesterday, who sparked the idea and help to create it and frame it. All the kids from Street Corner Resources, the elected officials who were there. I want to thank the National Action Network, Reverend Al Sharpton was there – all of the folks who came together to say in common, this is our message. This is what we believe. This is who we are. And I think that photo says it all – that is our truth and it's not going anywhere. This is our future as New York City.

Now, everybody, I want to now turn to just a couple of much more mundane matters, because we're talking about the biggest and most important issues of the day, but now let's talk to just quickly about a couple of very practical realities. And one is bearing down on us right now, we have a tropical storm hitting New York City as we speak. Now, so far, knock on wood, I think the impact on the city will be pretty limited, but we take it seriously always. We always watch carefully when we know there's a weather problem. So, we expect heavy rain today, lasting into early tomorrow. We expect some pretty heavy winds and we need people to be ready for that. And some flash flooding in certain parts of the city. So, look, be ready for it and make adjustments to your plans. And particularly to our wonderful colleagues in the restaurant industry who are doing so well with the Open Restaurants, it's been an amazing initiative, but just want to remind you, tonight's not going to be a great night for outdoor dining and get your furniture and umbrellas and everything in so they don't go flying away and creating any kind of danger. And then, hopefully that will all pass by Saturday morning and you'll be back in business for Saturday evening.

And then, on a very mundane, but always emotionally important matter to the people who live in neighborhoods and have to grapple with alternate side parking. And it's one of the things over the years people give me an earful on. So, the good news is, alternate side parking has been suspended through this Sunday, July 12th. We're going to extend that suspension to Sunday, July 19th, and continue to evaluate how that's going. And then when we decided to come back, we're

going to come back with some clarity on the new rules, because I think people need and deserve clear information. So, we'll be doing that in the meantime.

Okay. Finally, the indicators for the day. So, let me give you an update. Number-one, daily number of people admitted to hospitals for suspected COVID-19 threshold is 200 patients; today's report, 62. Number two, daily number of people in Health + Hospital's ICU's, threshold three 75; today's report is 293. And finally, percentage of people tested citywide positive for COVID-19, threshold is 15 percent; today's report, a very good one, two percent. So, congratulations again. Every time I give you a good report, I'll remind you, it's because of your hard work.

A few words in Spanish –

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

With that, we'll turn to our colleagues in the media and please let me know the name and outlet of each journalist.

Moderator: Hi, al. Just a reminder that we have with us today State Senator Benjamin, CEO of Street Corner Resources Sekou, Deputy Mayor Thompson, Emergency Management Commissioner Criswell, and Senior Advisor. Dr. Varma. With that, we'll start with Andrew Siff from NBC.

Question: Good morning, everyone. And also, good luck and congrats to Freddi today. My first question, Mayor, has to do with the outdoor dining that you just referenced in terms of the weather. Given that all they have at this point, as far as customers coming to their establishment is outdoor dining, how damaging to many, many businesses can weather days like this be? And is there anything the City can do to help these establishments if they lose too much on a day like this?

Mayor: Yeah, Andrew, look, I obviously wish we could have a perfect sunny weather all the time, but I know the restaurant owners know that's not the case. What I've heard from the restaurant community is they are thrilled with outdoor dining. It's expanding all the time. It's making a huge impact on their bottom line. They're bringing back their workers more and more, but remember even when outdoor dining isn't happening we do have takeout and delivery happening on a big scale. So I would say to all New Yorkers, if you were going to go out tonight, instead order in and keep helping our restaurant community, but look, we want to keep expanding outdoor dining. We're going to do that with the Open Streets more and more, and I think with just continued efforts to support the industry, that a lot of restaurants are going to make it until we get to better times. Some are still very challenged, but I think, you know, a lot of us do very well with the plan we have in place.

Question: My next question is a COVID question and maybe Dr. Varma can weigh in as well. Are you baffled, surprised, can you explain the fact that there's been no measurable uptick from Phase One, Phase Two, Phase Three, given the massive increase in the number of cases in other states and a loosely enforced quarantine at best, do you think there's some kind of herd immunity taking root in New York City, New York State that explains the level of transmission at this point, and if Dr. Varma could weigh in as well?

Mayor: I'll start and turn to Dr. Varma very quickly. Andrew, it's a great question. I just remind you New Yorkers learned powerful lessons, and then they really owned those lessons in terms of wearing face coverings, in terms of social distancing. We have to look at how much discipline and focus there has been, how much unity there's been in New York City, which we did not see in the other parts of the country that have had the problems. A lot of precautions put in place. People have been really devoted, putting up those hand sanitizer stands, all sorts of things that have helped to keep people safe, and then the Test and Trace Corps, huge x-factor to have that constant presence out there working with people, making sure they're safe, making sure they have what they need, obviously massive testing. We're up to 40,000 tests a day now. That's something a lot of other places have not been able to achieve. I think all of these pieces are contributing to why you see sustained progress. Take it away, Dr. Varma.

Senior Advisor Jay Varma: Yeah. Thank you very much for the question. I concur entirely with actually the Mayor's assessment. I think it would be incorrect to attribute the current status of cases to immunity, because there's a lot that we don't know about immunity and there's also what we know, which is that the vast majority of New Yorkers actually weren't infected. So the most likely explanations for our current situation are as the Mayor pointed out the combination of our defensive strategies, physical distancing, wearing face covers, good hygiene, and as the Mayor also pointed out importantly, the offensive strategies, a massive increase in the amount of testing that's going on and testing that's tied to identifying contacts and safely separating cases and contacts.

Mayor: I don't, I may have missed it. You speak to the herd immunity question?

Senior Advisor Varma: Yes, Mr. Mayor. Yes, I mentioned, I think that immunity is a very unlikely explanation for this because we know that the vast majority of New Yorkers actually weren't infected, and so we're not nearly at a level where we would expect that immunity would play a major role in decreasing transmission. There's still far too many New Yorkers who are susceptible. Thank you doctor.

Moderator: Next, we have Katie from the Wall Street Journal.

Question: Good morning, everyone. I have two questions, but first the best of luck to Freddi, you earned it. My first question has to do with the announcement on your weekend plans in Harlem, I know you mentioned the Parks Department stepping in, I guess, to provide some programming, but the Parks Department also saw some significant cuts in the budget. Obviously there's financial issues, but part of that was cutting some staffers like the Park Rangers and Park Enforcement Agents. So, I mean, would you consider perhaps funding some of these back if they're going to play a role in these larger and broader and important antiviolence initiatives and then I have one after.

Mayor: Yeah. Katie look, every it's a very good question. Every agency had to find ways to save money. None of it was fun and easy. I assure you we are going to make sure that what we have, we stretch to the farthest possible, but as I said, the antiviolence efforts are going to be first and foremost from the community. City agencies have a crucial role to play, but what we need to do is get the community more deeply involved. So that's, that's where our focus will be. Yeah. Please hold on Katie. One sec, Senator Benjamin.

State Senator Brian Benjamin: I also think there's a role to play for some of our private entities. There are a number of philanthropic groups, individuals with significant wealth in this city who can step up and play a role here. So I don't think it all falls on the city. I think we should be calling on a number of our wealthy individuals to step up and help. So that's part of the conversation that we've been having in our Harlem community policing task force, is figuring out ways to leverage outside donations to help as well.

Mayor: Thank you very much. Go ahead Katie.

Question: And my second one is about Tropical Storm Fay. I know you, you told us to be ready if you want to outline a little bit about what the city's doing to prepare? I know especially flooding is a large concern, and one thing on the topic of alternate side parking I know that storm drains tend to hold on because the storm drains, when there isn't as much alternate side parking, the storm drains tend to get clogged with leaves and that kind of thing, and that's where the root of a lot of this localized flooding is so I don't know if you want to talk—

Mayor: We had, obviously we had it a week ago, so I think we're pretty up to date on that front, and there's just been a hell of a lot less litter and material out there because there's been so much less activity, but Commissioner Criswell, you want to speak about any other impacts and precautions were taken?

Commissioner Deanne Criswell, Emergency Management: Yes, absolutely. Katie, we activated our flash flood plan yesterday, which means we've had the Department of Environmental Protection and others out throughout the city clearing the catch basins, because we do know that that is a concern across the city. Some of the precautions that we've put in place. We do have our down tree task force on alert because we do expect that we're going to have some damage to trees because of the winds that are coming in and we've activated our emergency operation center in a virtual sense. It was activated partially for COVID.

Mayor: Can we hear her? Deanne, can we hear you?

Commissioner Criswell: And it will be activated through tomorrow.

Moderator: Next, we have Nolan from the Post.

Question: Good morning, everybody. Is this working? Yeah, we can hear you. How are you doing? I'm all right. I too would just like to extend my best wishes to Friday on our last day. I'd like to start with the news that you guys put out yesterday that you're suspending once again all large events in the city through at least September 30th. Why continue to suspend these events and continue to give your blessing to these large protests, you know, demanding civil rights reforms?

Mayor: Again, look, we looked at these large events. We looked at all the other initiatives we have going on now, the Open Streets, the Open Restaurants, how much people are using parks, one thing or another, it just made more sense to keep the focus on what is working now to maximize the space available to people and not have it be taken up by large events. Right now, what people are doing. No one is they're getting fresh air and recreation the right way with a lot

of devotion to social distancing and face coverings. That can't happen if events are interfering with the ways that we've set things up. So it just makes more sense not to have them. I've said plenty of times the protest, this is a particular moment in American history where 400 years of oppression, 400 years of racism are being addressed in a very, very powerful way that can't compare to anything else, and people's voices needed to be heard. Go ahead.

Question: Secondly, Yoav and Gloria asked about this yesterday, but the New York City Police Department finally put out statistics that showed that only 91 of the roughly 11,000 people you know granted you know some sort of a release factor bail reform [inaudible] COVID, have been linked to shootings in the city, and the figures obtained by the Post also showed that the police department inflated those figures by tallying witnesses in victims in the count. That comes after the Police Department mishandled the scene outside of a Shake Shack downtown, it comes after—

Mayor: Nolan, no speeches. What's your question, brother, what's your question?

Question: Well, no, it's not a speech. It's a pattern of behavior, and I'm trying to get your response to the pattern of behavior, which is after – which is why should people have faith in public policy pronouncements from the Police Department on these issues? If they've gotten – they've gotten a slew of – they've been providing you know, what is essentially a slew of misinformation?

Mayor: I just disagree with that characterization. I mean, first of all, in the case of Shake Shack, which is a very strange situation, Chief Harrison within hours set the record straight as to what was happening there, and he was speaking for the NYPD at the highest level. Look, on the question of everything that is created, the challenges we're facing in recent weeks. As I said yesterday, there are many, many factors, and that's what Commissioner Shea said a few days ago in NY1 – it's a perfect storm of factors, mainly about the coronavirus, mainly about the fact that the court system is not functioning that we're not seeing prosecutions of gun violence. That there's just a massive disruption in people's lives, tremendous frustration that people don't have anything positive to do, have lost their livelihoods, et cetera. That's the core reason. Look, I understand that some folks in the Police Department are focusing on specific problems that they see. I don't necessarily see the same prioritization of the problems, but I know they're speaking from what they believe to be true, and they're also speaking about the bigger impacts not just the individual statistics. So I think they're expressing what they see. I'm expressing what I see, which I think is first and foremost about the coronavirus, but most importantly is what we do about it, and that's why today is important to talk about a unified strategy from the grassroots up.

Moderator: Next, we have Juliet from 1010 WINS.

Question: Oh, hi. Good morning, all. How are you today?

Mayor: Good Juliet. How are you?

Question: I'm fine. Thank you. So my first question involves the schools. Different countries are using different safety protocols in schools, spraying children's shoes, having hand-washing locations or having everyone's temperatures taken, you know, students, staff, teachers, when they walk into the building, what will your health and safety protocols be in the schools?

Mayor: Yeah, you're going to get a lot more information on that next few days, but they're going to be rigorous. It's about health and safety first Juliet. So first of all, remember if the survey we got from 400,000 parents is right, something like 75 percent of kids will come to school, but about 25 percent of parents will decide that they want to hold their kids back from school. Any kid who's sick or the message is always going to be, or any adult who's sick, don't come to school. We're definitely going to have hand washing stations and hand sanitizer all over the place, constant cleaning each day, a lot of measures. What we're going to do at entry, we're going to announce shortly, but the point of all of this Juliet is it's going to be layer upon layer of health and safety measures to protect everyone. That's the only way can bring school back is with a very, very strong set of health and safety protections, and again, we're going to look at the data right up until the days before school to make sure that everything is telling us it's okay to move forward. Go ahead.

Question: Okay. Thank you, and my second question involves the initiative you're announcing today. How is this dealing with gangs and the guns that the gangs use, which seems to proliferate a lot of the violence?

Mayor: I'll start, and I think Iesha might have a thing or two to say on this topic because she spent her life working on it. Look, there's two pieces to this equation in a sense, Juliet. The first is of course, to stop the flow of guns into New York City. This is a constant fight because of the what's broken with the laws in this country that allow the flow of guns so frequently to get guns off the streets, through the NYPD and every way we can, and obviously I've talked about a lot of times, we need the court system to function. We need the prosecutions to make that happen, but that's one piece of the equation. The other piece of the equation is to stop people who have guns from using their guns, to stop violence from happening to begin with, to stop retaliation, to see a problem coming and intervene and mediate, and that's what the Cure Violence Movement and the Crisis Management System does, and Iesha, maybe you could help people understand what that feels like at the ground level and the work that you and your colleagues do.

Iesha Sekou: I'll tell you just yesterday, after we returned from Black Lives Matter, we interrupted a situation that was happening between a young person, two, three different young people, and because the team came outside of the office, the barbershop alerted us that there was a situation, and because of all of us together, even one of the hairdressers, female, in the barbershop, because everybody as a community came out, we were able to interrupt a situation that could have ended in a fatality, and that was gang-related. We were able to stop it.

Mayor: Help people understand what you do to mediate what you do to diffuse.

Sekou: Oftentimes you have to quickly figure out what's going on and try to safely engage those involved as quickly as possible, and sometimes it's a voice that says, stop. We're not doing that. Or can you walk with me? And you get the one who's the most heightened to move away from the situation. So it's not as easy as just saying stop the violence. That's not it, and you have to have other people in the community who are witnessing that to support the act, not happening. That's key because the more people are supporting the violent act with cameras, videotaping negative behavior, the more the people who are ready to fight or shoot become enraged, and it escalates what we want to do is always deescalate, bring it down. So camera's down, people

talking to each other, encouragement, moving the most heated one away from the situation and having communal voice.

So those are just – without going into a lot of detail – those are just some of the immediate things that people can do and that we do. Oftentimes we have to go in the dark at night and have deep conversations about what's really going on. Sometimes it's all beefs that the young people don't even know why the beefs started. Families who hate the other family, and when you say, well, why are you fighting? They say, well, I don't really know, we never liked each other, but there's no real substance to that. It may have been something that happened 25 years ago. And so sometimes getting to that place where you have that conversation and you say, well, so why are we carrying this on? And then they just go, I don't know, we never liked each other. You know, it's just always been a beef. So it's a place where you have conversation, it's a place where we have interaction, it's a place where the community has a voice, and we have to do everything. It's whatever is necessary to save the life. And so sometimes it's a few other things, you know, sometimes you have to grab a kid up once in a while and put them in the van and just say, look, you're not getting out until we bring this down. So I won't say all of everything, some things are orthodox and sometimes you have to use some unorthodox moves because it's really at the end of the day about saving the life. And I know even with parents, they said to me, oh, I heard that your team, you know, had to grab my kid up, and I thank you because they would rather that than have to bury their child. So we do what is necessary and to save the life. That's the bottom line, save the life.

So I just want to say when we talk about new initiatives, we have to try whatever we need to. I mean, like, this is not always where it's, you know, clear and you just do this and it works. Sometimes you have to try some different things. You give people, voice, you bring in the old heads from the neighborhood that can talk to the young people and have conversation. You bring in the grandmas or strong voices that have power with those that are gang affiliated, and they can say, well, I knew him when he was a baby, I used to babysit him and you bring those voices to the table, and that's what Occupy is about. Street Corner Resources started Occupy in like 2006, 2007, and we did that with Pastor Williams and then I thank the National Action Network for later on coming in and raising that to a different level. I asked if we can call an Occupy across the country and Reverend Sharpton said yes. And having these conversations with clergy, community leaders, indigenous leaders in the community, our elected officials and the people right there on the ground that live in the neighborhoods and giving them the power to take their block back and to have voice and to ask for things. That's what Occupy is. So it's kind of like a communal meeting coming together, sometimes we don't agree and then we get to agreement. But we all know that we want life to be better, and that's what it's about, and we don't want to lose life.

Mayor: Let me just pick up on this and Juliet, it's really important to hear – Iesha used to saying some profound truths here. I want to first acknowledge that Iesha and everyone else who does the work, Cure Violence Movement and Crisis Management System. Let's be clear, these are people there – Iesha is not wearing a uniform. She does not have a weapon. She does not have a badge, but she is putting herself in harm's way. And I really think that bears recognition that all the folks in this movement put their lives on the line for the safety of their community. And so we need to honor that to begin with. Second, this city has put millions and millions of dollars into building up the Cure Violence Movement and the Crisis Management System, and it is really money well spent because we are going to the root of the problem. We are trying to create

community solutions. You can police in some very effective ways, but that is not the same as addressing the root causes. Just like it was important to take money from the police budget and put it into youth services, it is important to also invest in community solutions to violence, because really what you're hearing from Iesha, in a world we're living in today, where community has been in many ways, disassembled and reduced, this is the recreation of community. This is creating communal values and communal structures for mediation and peace. The fact that elders are being brought into the discussion. The fact that family members are being brought in, this is the purest grassroots way of addressing violence.

So we're all used to this sort of occupying army mindset about how you stop violence. That's actually not how you stop violence. And in fact, if someone looks carefully, the growing recognition within the NYPD in the last seven years, that it has to be community based solutions. That's why neighborhood policing became the standard of the NYPD. And when we had the call just a few days ago with the leaders of Harlem and Chief Monahan, Chief Pichardo, Chief, Maddrey all on the call saying the only way we're going to change the cycle is with the community. Here are the top uniformed officers of the NYPD saying, we need your help because this is not something that could be done through arrests alone. This is something that has to be done from the grassroots up. So I wanted to dwell on this for a moment because it's so important to changing the conversation in this city. Just think about why Iesha said that if there's about to be a situation, the community taking charge of the situation, the stakeholders, the people on the block saying, we're not going to allow violence on our own block, what honor it takes to do that, what strength and courage it takes to do that. Let's applaud that, let's support that. And that's how we become a more profoundly safe city for the future. Please, Brian.

Senator Benjamin: Mr. Mayor, there was one thing that we talked about in our call, a very tangible solution that's proactive, and I think there's proactive solutions, and then there's going to be reactive solutions. Iesha talked very articulately about how she puts herself in harm's way for – on a reactive basis, but on a proactive basis, we know who the OGs are. We know who some of the youth leaders are who are out there in the streets. And you like this idea where we said, we're going to have meetings and dinners – and not with you, right? But they're going to be some community led conference conversations where we're going to meet with them and try to foster peace treaties, try to help resolve beef, try to do the things that makes them no, you know what, oh our voice does matter. Our voice does care. We're not out here alone.

If they're – you know, some of them are crying just as much as the rest of us with the gun violence. You know, it's not somehow, you know, those of us who are sort of “regular law, abiding citizens” are the only ones who are completely outraged by what's going on. We have a number of folks who might be doing some things that they're not so proud of who deeply care as well. We have to engage them in a constructive way to address these issues. And that's something that we're doing and I'm excited that you think is a good idea as well.

Mayor: I do indeed. And I thank you. I think it's going to make a huge impact.

Moderator: Last two for today. Next we have Joe from Politico.

Question: Morning, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor: Hey, Joe.

Question: I wanted to ask just another follow up question about the shootings. I was curious if you could go into any specific data points or trends that you've seen that lead you to believe the rise and shootings is primarily caused by the effects of coronavirus and the shutdown?

Mayor: Sure. Joe look at the last seven years. I mean, some of this is just, you know, analyzing the trend lines and when you see something wildly aberrant, it tells you something. So for the first six years of this administration, we essentially had consistently reduced crime while getting rid of the stop and frisk a broken policy, while reducing arrest radically, we saw crime keep going down and a lot of investment in Cure Violence Crisis Management System, a lot of investment in grassroots community needs. Why did we see this sudden uptick, particularly in recent months? Because everything's become unglued that helps keep things together. A functioning criminal justice system - makes that there's consequence. If someone does something wrong and violent they're arrested, and then there is a trial and there's an outcome. All of that has been unglued.

Now we're going to get it back. The court system, you know, Commissioner Shea met with the Chief Judge and the DA's. And I do think in the coming weeks you're going to see the court system come back to life, you're going to see the prosecutions intensify, but it just stands to reason when you see such a radical change that something caused it, and what was the big X-factor? A pandemic that undermined every aspect of people's lives and took away any normalcy. Look, folks who have a job, folks who are going to school, folks who have expectations on them are not folks who are going out in generally involved in violence, but all that got unglued, and we got to piece it back together again, and we will. Go ahead, Joe,

Question: And just a quick follow up. I know that there are elements, you know, behind these shootings that you and the Police Commissioner seem to disagree about. I mean, mainly bail reform, which I think we've seen the numbers show are not causing this spike. I'm curious if you get assessments of crime trends, like personally, from you know, places in City Hall or outside of City Hall, other than the NYPD, and if so, where do you get these assessments?

Mayor: Yeah that's why for years, actually, not just in this administration, but before this administration, there's been an office in City Hall focused on criminal justice and Liz Glazer and her team constantly do an analysis of what's happening. First Deputy Mayor Dean Fuleihan is someone who I talk to every day about what we're seeing, not just from the NYPD perspective, but from broader perspective as well. So yeah, we watch this stuff obviously, carefully, daily, but for more than one perspective. And I think it's important to recognize there's always going to be some disagreements, but there's not disagreements on the fundamentals. The fundamentals are that we have had a massive societal disruption. It has to be addressed. Some of that needs to be addressed structurally with things like the court system stopping - starting up again I should say. Some of it, of course is bringing our whole society back and ideally we need a vaccine for that. But some of it is about continuing to evolve the approach of the NYPD and to deepen these communities based solutions. This is a long, you know, we're on a long trajectory here and we're not going to solve these things overnight, but at anyone who looks at the last 25 years and sees how far New York City has come, we'll realize that we have tremendous ability to change and innovate and improve in this city, and that's what we're going to do again.

Moderator: Last question for today. We have Reuvain from Hamodia.

Question: Hi, good morning everyone. I'm honored to be the last reporter to ask a question during Freddi's time. I want to thank you very much for your great work.

Mayor: You'll tell your grandchildren that Reuvain.

Question: [Inaudible] a report out yesterday says that a quarter of New York City renters have not paid any rent since March and you have repeatedly supported allowing renters to delay payments for long periods. Does this report cause you to reconsider your refusal to decrease the interest rate for late property tax payments, from what critics call loansharking levels, considering that renters haven't paid in landlords don't have money?

Mayor: Again. I want everyone who can pay the rent to pay the rent. There are a lot of people still employed in New York City. There are a lot of people working remotely. Everyone can pay the rent, you owe it to this whole city, to your community to pay the rent so that your building can be kept up for everyone's benefit. Folks who simply can't pay the rent should not be put out on the street. They should be given an opportunity to pay over a longer period of time, and I think the State still needs to give us better rules to allow for that. It's a very different matter than what we're asking of folks in terms of their commitment to their city and the payments they have due to the city. We've tried to be flexible in hardship cases. We've tried to make accommodation, but Reuvain, we've got to keep the City of New York going. If you want a restart, and I know you do we have to have the resources to pay for everything that keeps this city going. We cannot let that go. It's too crucial to the future. Go ahead.

Question: There's video online that shows of a vandal spraying graffiti on the Surrogate's Courthouse and police stand by and do nothing. Have you instructed the police to stop graffiti or to let it go?

Mayor: Graffiti is never acceptable. It will be addressed. Everything has to be done the right way at the right time. But look, I want to remind everyone sometimes I hear these questions and again, I think there's an effort to take a single moment or a single instance and treat it like, you know, everything else we know before is suddenly erased. Respectfully, I see that kind of question from you from time to time. It just doesn't play. In the end there'll be individual instances where you don't know everything else going on and there're specific reasons why the police handle something a certain way, but we know what history has taught us. The NYPD for years and years has made New York City safer and safer, far safer than it was. But what we now know, and the NYPD believes is that the greatest solutions have to come with the community. And we, as an administration, are supporting community based solutions more and more, and they're working more and more and that's what's going to help us turn around. So I'm not going to fall into the trap of acting like everything we've learned suddenly isn't there. Of course, we're going to deal with a whole range of challenges. That's what we've always done. That's what we will do again.

Everybody. Let me just conclude, first of all, with a real, thank you to our guests today, to Iesha and Brian for everything you're doing in the community and what a difference it's going to make. And then I want to say a special farewell. As you can hear folks, a number of the journalists are saluting Freddi Goldstein, my Press Secretary, job well done after four years. Thank you for your extraordinary efforts, cool, smart efforts on behalf of the people of New York City. Never, never

flappable. And Wiley Norvell, our Communications Director. After nine long years – thank you, Wiley, for your amazing contributions to the City of New York and your vision and your amazing creativity, which has been exhibited throughout. The team will carry on. I want to welcome again, Bill Neidhardt, my new press secretary, who has come to us from an extraordinary movement, the Bernie Sanders campaign, and has done great work all over America and been through the fire and back and ready for what he's going to do here in New York City.

So everyone, look, I'll conclude today with a simple point, and I think the word that comes to my mind after we've talked today about the community, and the community creating safety, and the community addressing issues, the word I want to use is ownership. I think a lot of times this gets forgotten. A lot of times the public discourse is around the notion of, well the government is going to do something for you or to you or some outside forces going to address the issue or there's some on, off switch for very complex societal challenges. That's not how it works. It actually works when people take ownership. It works when communities find their own solutions. Now sometimes government can help a lot. Sometimes government can support it, foster it. Sometimes government can spark it. Sometimes, government has to get out of the way and let the people do what the people do best. But I have a lot of faith in the people, and I know people in the Harlem community are going to find a path forward. They have. This is one of the historic amazing communities of this city, of this nation, legendary for a reason. They have fought through challenges before, they will do it again. But ownership, New Yorkers, taking on a challenge and deciding that we can get somewhere together, and that's been the history of the coronavirus. The reason that we're able to talk today about a much safer, healthier city, because you all took ownership and you all believed this was your city and you made things happen and that's how we go forward. Thank you, everybody.

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