



THE CITY OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
NEW YORK, NY 10007

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CONTACT: pressoffice@cityhall.nyc.gov, (212) 788-2958

RUSH TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO HOLDS IMPROMPTU PRESS GAGGLE

Mayor Bill de Blasio: I just want to say, since you're all gathered – I'm very supportive of the activists who are here honoring Denim Day and supporting efforts to stop violence against women. And I know there's a particular concern about what's been happening on our college campuses, and I want to commend the public advocate, who has been doing great work on this issue, and Senator Gillibrand, and others. And I think this is an issue that's gotten, finally, the attention it deserves. Obviously – a day for me where I'm thinking about college campuses in a different light. But you know, this is an example, I think – some of what we've seen, for example, at universities in New York State – you know, we like to think of ourselves as an enlightened place and yet, we have a long way to go to get a message across for our young people that violence against women is absolutely unacceptable. So I really want to commend those who are here on that issue. Anything on your mind?

Question: Mr. Mayor, can you comment on Hillary Clinton's statement in support of Melissa Mark's push to decriminalize –

Mayor: I haven't seen her statement yet so I can't comment.

Question: But she's basically saying there should be alternative sentences for people in minor crimes. I wonder, going on that theme, if you think that maybe some adjustments or updating could be made for some of the low-level offenses to make it [inaudible] to changing times.

Mayor: Well again, I want to be very clear. Speaker Mark-Viverito – who is a friend and someone I think very highly of – has offered some ideas. We're certainly going to have a real and productive conversation on those ideas. Now, let me also be clear, there's been some supposition out there that some kind of understanding has been reached – this discussion's only begun. What we're doing now is what we believe in. We believe in quality of life enforcement. Commissioner Bratton and I are absolutely united on this point. But I've said many times that, you know, the broken windows approach, the enforcement of quality of life offenses is a basic strategy that we will always look at and consider with changing times. That's why, last year, we made two major revisions. We greatly decreased the number of arrests for low-level marijuana offenses and we greatly increased the amount of enforcement related to traffic-related crimes. So, this is something we do on an ongoing basis. The speaker has put some ideas on the table, and I respect that. But I also want to be clear that we are adamant. We need to keep crime low, and the basic strategy has been one of the underpinnings of reducing crime in this city over the last 20-plus years. That's the starting point. And then we will always consider other ideas and see if there's revisions we want to make. But that's a very deliberative process.

Question: I wonder if you think it makes sense for people who might be arrested for something like being at the park at dusk, to stand a couple of weeks in jail because they can't make bail until they're case is held, when they could be treated administratively?

Mayor: Separate – good question but separate question about bail. We’re trying to do a lot to change the bail structure to begin with. We don’t want to see people end up at Rikers because there’s a small amount in bail they can’t make when there’s alternative ways to approach that. We think there’s a lot of ways to create a better relationship between police and community. As Commissioner Bratton’s talked about – the peace dividend, which I think is a very powerful phrase. What’s happened over the last year-plus is a lot of the negative interaction between police and community has been greatly reduced – obviously the stops, but a lot of other negative interactions as well. And the commissioner is very committed to making that change, and I respect that greatly and agree with that. So it’s something we’re looking at all the time. But in terms of the basic offenses that are on the books right now, we just have to be careful to evaluate each one very carefully. Some people have talked about fare evasion. I’ve made the point that fare evasion should not be looked at too lightly. We have often found in the case of fare evasion that the individuals who attempt fare evasion have outstanding warrants or have weapons on them. And this is one of the classic examples of what [inaudible] the broken windows approach from the very beginning. So I think each situation has to be looked at very carefully with the facts to make sure that any action we take supports our continued effort to keep crime low. And then we’re always, of course, looking for ways to bring police and community together. Those two ideas have to coexist. When it came to the marijuana arrests – and I do think this needs to be looked at more intensely – you know – 65 percent decrease in marijuana arrests because we came up with a careful plan to work with prosecutors. We all came to the conclusion we could do this without in any way lessening public safety, and it’s working. So these things have to be handled carefully.

Question: Do you have any message for – there’s protest in solidarity with what’s happening in – everything that’s happening in Baltimore. So now it’s in New York. Do you have a message for those protestors? I think they’re going to start in Union Square. What would you say to them?

Mayor: Well, I’d say if you want to make change, keep things peaceful. The obvious fact is when anyone moves away from violent – moves away from nonviolent protests – when anyone gets involved in violent protests, it denigrates their cause. The vast majority of people who are trying to work on the relationship between police and community do it in a peaceful manner. And that’s the only way change is ever going to be made – nonviolent, local protestors [inaudible] for social change in America. So, I think the vast majority of the protestors get it. I heard from Baltimore, which I find positive, that some of the protestors saw people who wanted to do violence and isolated them, and worked with the police to isolate them – that’s important. Anyone who means to do violence, anyone who means to assault police officers or assault property should be isolated from the rest, and the protestors should work with the police to deal with them. I think that’s my central message. I think on the bigger front, we all understand that we have a lot of work to do to bring police and community together. A lot of the folks talk about the Baltimore situation and rightfully talked about the economic underpinnings of the crisis. This is why we’re doing so much here to fight income inequality. It’s an issue that has to be addressed nationally. It’s one of the contributing factors here, and we have to get [inaudible] as well.

Question: What about Dante? Any reason he chose Yale – or is looking forward to in terms of college life?

Mayor: Dante – you know, Dante is a very deliberate guy and he did a lot of research, and he spent time on the campus a couple of different times, and he had some great options. But he was very excited at the caliber of the academic life at Yale. Chirlane and I are obviously thrilled that he will be nearby. But Dante did his research because – I was very impressed – much more than I ever did when it was my time to make the decision. Yes, sir?

Question: Your thoughts on – you mentioned Baltimore – have you reached out to mayor there at all?

Mayor: Yes, I have. I spoke to her on Saturday. I know Stephanie Rawlings-Blake pretty well. Obviously when I talked to her Saturday – I guess it was late-morning, early-afternoon – it was before some of the worst stuff – worst of the experience. But she’s a very capable leader, a very thoughtful leader. I think this was a tough moment obviously for Baltimore. I think they were quick to make adjustments and obviously last night went a lot better. But again, we know the history of Buffalo – excuse me, Baltimore – we know the history of

Baltimore well before she got there. It's a city that's been through a lot. It's a city that really dealt with some of the worst crime dynamics of any city in America, some of the toughest economic changes, and she's been trying to pull that city forward, and I really wish her luck. You know, I think mayors all around the country stand in solidarity with her.

Unknown: Thank you, guys.

Question: [Inaudible]

Mayor: Again, I think [inaudible].

Question: [Inaudible]

Mayor: I have a lot of respect for the speaker, but she's put out some broad ideas. I know she met with the commissioner – that's good. But there has not even been a beginning of a real conversation. So any reports suggesting that there's a deal in the [inaudible] is just not true.

Question: But Mr. Mayor, you're not opposed to any changes?

Mayor: Again, I want to stay right where I am on the fact that there was a suggestion there's a deal. There's no deal. There's a good and interesting proposal, and we'll certainly talk about it. But I think I've been very clear about where we're going, in general.

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