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**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO, FIRST LADY MCCRAY HOST ANNUAL
INTERFAITH BREAKFAST AT THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY**

First Lady Chirlane McCray: Good morning.

Audience: Good morning.

First Lady McCray: I said, good morning!

Audience: Good morning!

First Lady McCray: I need to feel you. I feel myself growing stronger under pressure –

[Laughter]

– Following so many amazing orators and people of faith. Thank you so much, Reverend Bernard, for your words, for your leadership. And thank you all for being here today and even more thank you all for the work that you do every day as leaders of faith.

I – I have to tell you, it's been such a privilege to work so closely with many of you over the past few years and it's really wonderful to see so many friends in this room – new friends, old friends.

I always leave these gatherings feeling that my spirit has been recharged and today will be no different than in years past.

And that's what you do, all of you, for people across the five boroughs. So many New Yorkers turn to you for support. You're the ones people turn to when their emotions are just too heavy to bear, when a child is in trouble, when home doesn't feel safe, or when their thoughts and feelings are spinning out of control. And that's why we have called on you so frequently, my husband and I.

And let me tell you, you sure have delivered.

[Applause]

When we first decided to host the Mental Health Weekend of Faith we didn't dare hope that 1,000 houses of worship across the city would participate and we could not have imagined that the next year that number would double. 2,000 faith leaders delivered a clear message to their communities – mental illness is a treatable disease, it is not a lack of discipline and it's not a moral failing.

You delivered that message, you made that happen, and I am forever grateful. New Yorkers are grateful. They come up to me and share how their pastor made them think differently about what their son was going through or their daughter was going through, how their imam helped them find the courage to ask for help. Whether they worship in synagogues or churches, temples or community centers, they tell me the same stories. Their enormous gratitude is almost always the same.

You spoke to them. You heard them. You helped them. You helped guide them and support them and get them the help that they need, and I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

Your generosity and heart means so much to me and I'm hoping that I can count on you to make this year's Weekend of Faith in May be even more successful.

So what do you think? Can we do this? Can you help us reach more people and have even greater impact this year?

[Applause]

Can we do it? I don't hear you. Can we do it?

Audience: Yes!

First Lady McCray: Yes, I know we can. I know we can. With all of you. And now because we've had such success breaking the silence on mental illness and substance misuse together, this year we are expanding this model to another challenge steeped in stigma and shame, and that is of course domestic violence.

So many New Yorkers deal with domestic violence in silence and isolation and they really shouldn't have to do that. Right? No.

But too often people offer judgement before offering a helping hand. We think we know the kind of people who are affected by this. We think it could never be someone in our own family or in our house of worship.

Well, we're wrong. Survivors of domestic violence look just like me and you. They are in our faith communities, our book clubs, our children's schools.

And though the victims of domestic violence are predominantly women, domestic violence is not a women's issue. It affects whole families and causes a cycle of trauma that can last for generations affecting health, education, and a community's stability.

And that's why we need you to help break the silence because people trust and respect you. You have a special power to convene and encourage people to part of the conversation and the solution especially men whose support and commitment is really crucial to our success.

So, I ask you to please join us for the first ever Weekend of Faith Against Domestic Violence. It will take place February 9th through 11th. And as Pastor Mike might say, we need people who take love seriously.

And what we ask is for you and faith leaders all over this city to incorporate a message about domestic violence in your services that weekend. We also need leaders to host domestic violence 1-0-1 workshops at their place of worship, and to visit our family justice centers which are located in every borough and will provide a host of services for survivors of domestic violence.

You can sign up by filling out the commitment card on your table right now. This is what the card looks like. Please look on your table right now. I want to make sure everyone has one. That's right.

And fill out this card right now and you can help us get to 500 participating houses of worship. And while you're in the signing mode, you can sign up for the Weekend of Faith for Mental Health in May as well.

Our team is here to help you. I think they're somewhere over here. Raise your hand, team.

Over there, okay. There you go. Right over there. If you have any questions or you need any more information they can help you and I just want to thank you again for your work and for your partnership, and everything you do to help support our families and our communities.

It is now my pleasure to introduce a steadfast partner in New York City's faith communities, my partner in love and life, our Mayor, Bill de Blasio.

[Applause]

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Thank you. Thank you, everybody.

So, you can see it's easy for me to be inspired every day because Chirlane and I wake up in the morning and the conversation begins right away. And that is a blessing.

I'm blessed to have a partner in all I do but we're blessed because she has taken a lifelong affectation and turned it into something powerful for this city.

That affectation is – Chirlane McCray does not like stigma, she does not like taboos, she does not like any barrier that holds people back. She’s never liked it. And she’s made it her life’s work.

I always love to tell the story of the fact that by the time she went to high school her family had moved to a predominantly white suburb in Springfield, Massachusetts and in that time in history it was important for people of all backgrounds to understand the American experience including the African American experience. And so Chirlane agitated in her high school for an African American Studies class. It did not have, shall we say, a natural constituency.

[Laughter]

But she believed people needed to learn anyway and she fought and she fought every step of the way since to open minds and to defeat stigma and to show that everyone deserves the dignity and the help they need.

And she has taken that to the issue of mental health in this city with such power. And the only way anything changes in the world is with everyone working together. The real change comes from the grassroots but sometimes a leader can spark a discussion, can spark a new idea.

And I have no doubt in this that there are tens of thousands of people with mental health challenges who are getting the help they deserve today because Chirlane McCray spoke up. Let’s thank her.

[Applause]

And because today is about faith in action, I ask everyone to fill out those cards that have been distributed so that we can fight the scourge of domestic violence together. It is everywhere and the only way we defeat it is to name it and to confront it and to make it absolutely socially unacceptable in every sense in faith, in every community, and to reach a hand out to those who have been victimized and so often felt they could not even come forward.

Something new is happening in this city when it comes to fighting domestic violence because that understanding of how open and honest we have to be as pervaded everything we do and I want to thank all of the public servants who are here from my administration because they have evinced this idea. But I want to specially thank the NYPD. NYPD now when they confront an instance of domestic violence, rather than just fill out a report and follow through the legal requirements now make it a practice to send the officers back to the home where this tragedy occurred and to send them over and over again to show tangibly, physically that the whole world is watching. And no matter what people may have been taught. No matter what they thought they could get away with. That the society that we represent today, personify by our men and women in uniform will not tolerate violence within the family.

[Applause]

And so I ask everyone to heed Chirlane's call, because we know that when you speak it changes our communities. This is why we have had all of us such a strong partnership because you put faith in action. When you speak something happens that can only happen through your voices and through your work. So let me see a little audience participation. Let me see a show of hands, who will participate in the weekend of faith action against domestic violence? Raise your hand. I think we have a majority Chirlane. Thank you.

I thank all of you for what you do for the city. Faith leaders who are here, elected officials, everyone – the public servants. This beautiful tableau of New York that you see here – and spend a minute before you leave this room. Look around and look at what we all have created in this city and look at the future of humanity because one day this will be the norm. I am sorry that we are one of the rare places that has achieved this unity, and this understanding. But some day it'll be the norm if we keep showing the way. So I thank everyone for the example you set. And I also love that the faith community in this city – I'm so struck by it and I have this vantage point now over these last years I didn't have before.

That the faith community in this city, in times of challenge when in so many parts of the world challenge and conflict mean people of different backgrounds and faiths immediately go to their separate corners to glare menacingly at each other. In a moment of crisis in this city, the natural thing to do is for people of all faiths to come together in the same room and seek a common solution.

[Applause]

We have been blessed in this work in the last four years as we have binded together the work of faith communities evermore intensely and coordinated that work with the work of government in a seamless and powerful alliance. We've had tremendous leadership and it takes a special moral voice to be able to bring everyone together. Pastor Mike Walrond thank you for you leadership.

[Applause]

I am going to be very quick. Here is what I want to tell you. About 30 years ago I was just starting out, I was trying to figure out how to have an impact in the world and like a lot of people in this room I grew up powerfully affected by the times around me. And I grew up in the era of the civil rights movement and the anti-Vietnam war movement and later Watergate. And saw like everyone here who witnessed those times, so much pain, so many contradictions but also saw an extraordinary people's spirit for change that emanated from the grass roots and moved mountains. And I tried to understand what made that possible. Why despite so much power being arrayed in the name of an unacceptable status-quo how was an unjust war stopped? How did people have been denied voting rights, finally win what they deserve? How was a corrupt President brought to his knees? How did these things happen by any normal concept of power and position that would not have been possible? And I watched and I saw time and again it was the people. It was those who raised their voices so powerfully. But I also saw the role the communities of faith played.

And I got involved in the 1980's at a point when for a lot of my generation we feared we were about to see another Vietnam in Central America. I got involved in the movement to stop our country from intervening unjustly in other countries. And that led me into powerful contact with faith leaders associated with liberation theology. And they by their example showed that faith was action. There was no barrier, there was no dichotomy, there was no separation. And you could apply this to any faith. And you heard it in the powerful prayers that open this breakfast.

The notion that it's not abstract, it's not words, the words are only spurring on the actions that change the hearts and minds of humanity. And I became convinced that change, real change can only happen through a deep partnership with faith leaders and faith communities. I got to be honest there are some people I admire and appreciate greatly who still feel a tentativeness about engaging people of faith. And I understand, I understand why over years and decades they may have come to feel that there was a chasm they couldn't ridge. But I think we've all grown together. I think we've all grown together. I think each in our own ways we put aside the biases of the past, the tendencies to exclusion or separation. And what you see here today is the product of everyone's work. It didn't happen randomly. It happened through decades of struggle. It brings us right here today in this city.

We could have years ago in this city fallen victim to division. We could have stopped trying, we could have stopped hoping. But once again whenever you want to know where the next change will come from just listen to the people. There was a beautiful and powerful movement in this city that said the unconstitutional and extraordinary over use of stop and frisk was tearing us apart.

And when that movement began it was considered a long shot. And naysayers said over and over that this desire for justice was inconsistent with safety. Remember that was not very many years ago. Remember what the norm was, remember what the assumption was, remember what the barrier we had to overcome was. But so many people in this room by faith stayed the course and said we will create something new. It was not just we were going to change a policy. We were going to create a new reality. By ending a policy that discriminated, that divided, that enraged. We would find a path of peace and healing.

So today in this City, every single person is an author of this. Today in this City, we provide an example to our country that safety and fairness walk hand in hand. We my friends are the safest big city in America.

[Applause]

But we got there by being fairer, by being more just. I said on inauguration day, and people – people remember inauguration day not through the power of my eloquence or anyone else's but because they are still thawing out from inauguration day.

[Laughter]

I said on inauguration day we set ourselves now on a path to be the fairest big city in America. The most just. The place where people are treated most decently. The place where there is the

least discrimination, where there is the most and most equal opportunity, that is the path we are now on. And I don't doubt our ability to achieve more all the time. That simple phrase, this far by faith, haven't we all lived it in these last years.

We didn't know that ending a broken policy of Stop and Frisk would necessarily and automatically make us safer. Our faith told us it would. Our hopes told us it would. We were willing to work to make it true but we had no guarantee. We had no guarantee that we could create Pre-K for all of our children and actually make it work. We had no guarantee that we could reach hundreds of thousands of people with mental health services that hadn't had them before. We all had to go down the road together in noble experimentation.

And I am so encouraged. For Chirlane and I after four years, we live in this very surprising reality. We are not tired. Well some days we are tired. But we generally aren't tired. We're literally are more optimistic than we were four years ago.

[Applause]

Because we've seen what we all can do together and it can never stop. It can never stop. We have to tell ourselves now, and believe it, and act on it, we will become safer. We will become more just. We will break down stigma even further. This only happens if we act fully as partners. This literally cannot happen without you.

There are children who will not get Pre-K unless you help them get it. There are people afflicted with a mental health challenge who will never get the support they need unless you help them get it. There are victims of domestic violence who will never be willing to come forward unless they hear your voice. You are at the center of this change.

I want to conclude with just a couple quick points. Yesterday was a powerful day because one thing that's also happened, that I'm so encouraged by, is faith leaders of all religions and all nationalities are united to protect mother Earth. And once upon a time it may have not been at the top of the agenda, but now voices of conscience and morality, more and more are pointing out that we have to change to save our future generations.

You know, a lot of times you are told, in every part of our society, but particularly in public life, you're told what you can't do. You are told the change that cannot occur. You are told the place is too high to reach. We've tried to make it a habit to do away with those self-imposed barriers.

So yesterday New York City did something that no city in America, no state in America has done. We said very simply that we are going to take our billions of dollars of investments and take them out of fossil fuel industries.

[Applause]

We are going to vote with our feet. We are going to send a message that we have to protect the health of our people, we have to end climate change, if we expect to have a more beautiful and unified society, there has to be a society here for that to be happening in, we have to protect our

earth. We have to protect our children and grandchildren. We acted. We created our own set of rules and we are going to help others to follow.

And that's true also as we engage these intense, and painful, and powerful debates in our nation. And please join me with a big round of applause for our brothers and sisters in Foley Square right now, fighting for the rights of our immigrant brothers and sisters.

[Applause]

We understand the moment in history but we are not defeated by the moment in history. We understand that the change begins right here. And this is the thing I really want to emphasize it's – everyone knows this reality when people hear bad news, or where they feel there is division or there is hatred, they sometimes go into their shell and start thinking about what can't happen but everyone in this room is the purveyor of what can happen. Of hope. Of possibility.

Anytime you are frustrated by something happening in Washington D.C., do not dwell on a temporal setback there. Don't dwell on something that, in my humble opinion, will only be for a short time.

[Applause]

Dwell on the good we can do right here. Dwell on the change we can make, person by person, neighborhood by neighborhood. Dwell on the fact that when, we in New York act, others take heed and are inspired and energized. Everyone in this room can help create a new and positive wave.

I don't ever feel defeated because I've seen what we all can do. And I never regard the setbacks as anything but temporary because I live that history that I told you about in the beginning. I've seen things overcome that no one believed could overcome. And I've seen it so often that it's almost become a norm.

But humans have this interesting habit. Even though they've seen the positive over and over again, they've been proven the power of faith and belief, still start to waiver. Still start to fall back. Still start to talk themselves out of their own power. No one talks people into belief in themselves, belief in their power, better than everyone in this room.

[Applause]

So I ask you in the year ahead, we've been inspired together by powerful ideas and prayers and fellowship of being together. In the year ahead, aim higher. Continue the progress and the momentum. Go deeper. Because, brothers and sisters, it's working. It's working. The changes we're making are taken hold and being felt and they're changing lives.

I want to thank you and it is my honor now to invite forward one of the faith leaders in this City who is both one of the most highly respected but beloved because he always manages to take the

most profound thoughts and somehow throws some borscht belt shtick into it at the same time. I invite to the stage for the closing benediction, Rabbi Joe Potasnik.

[Applause]

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