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**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO APPEARS LIVE ON MSNBC'S THE LAST  
WORD WITH LAWRENCE O'DONNELL**

**Lawrence O'Donnell:** New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio is now joining us by phone. Mayor de Blasio, thank you very much for joining us tonight.

**Mayor Bill de Blasio:** My pleasure, Lawrence. How are you doing?

**O'Donnell:** Well, it's a difficult night, I think, all over this country. We have tonight 1,836,845 cases of coronavirus. We have 106,742 deaths – it's now 107,852 deaths from coronavirus tonight. Just over a week ago or about a week ago, you thought that was the only crisis you'd be dealing with tonight in your city. How are you dealing with the intersection of these large protests, these large gatherings of people and your need to control the spread of coronavirus in New York City?

**Mayor:** Yeah. Lawrence, it's like a perfect storm wrapped in another perfect storm. But the reality is – the essence of all of us is the coronavirus, right? This is what has caused – before even the murder of George Floyd – so much anger and frustration over disparity, so much anger and frustration because people have lost jobs, lost livelihood, and then just being cooped up for months, and that's its own the combination of features that really fuel a real understandable unrest. And we are trying to address it substantively, address it in terms of safety and security, but also remember that we still have – as you said, we've got to make people safe in terms of coronavirus. We're planning to start our reopening on Monday, and this has not changed that, but it has complicated it, because a lot of energy and resources going to try and address this reality, a lot of people being in close proximity, which I'm worried about on a health level. There's a lot of moving parts, but, Lawrence, you know, in terms of how we move forward as that city, as a country, we've got to go at each and every one of these, right? There's a lot of injustice on display and the only way to deal with it is to answer piece by piece each element of injustice and to show people that something can change. I mean, you've got to prove to people that change is possible and the coronavirus has laid it bare. And one other thing I'd say is, you know, before the last few days, we actually had a pretty good sense of unity in this city of folks banding together, you know, to fight a common enemy, which was this disease. And New Yorkers were pretty amazing in the way they handled it and stuck together and helped each other. This doesn't change that – we still need to stick together if we're going to overcome this disease.

**O'Donnell:** Some of the injustice on display has been seen by protestors as the actions of the NYPD in some of their choices about how to deal with crowds, including the video that we have all now seen many times of NYPD police vehicles choosing – choosing to drive, move those

vehicles into crowds. That shot is up on our screen now, Mr. Mayor, which I know you've seen those two police vehicles pushing into the crowd. What are you doing? What is your message to the NYPD police officers, including the officers in those two cars about what they need to do in terms of showing restraint and what will happen to them if they don't?

**Mayor:** Well, look that should never happen again in New York City, it's as simple as that. That was a very, very dangerous moment. It should never happen again. And the whole message of these days is that we have to prove – and this is on me to do and on our Police Commissioner to do – we have to prove that any time – and there will be due process, Lawrence – I know you and I believe in that, so many people – we need the real investigation, real due process – but anytime an officer has done the wrong thing, there has to be consequences. And sometimes that means an officer needs to be taken off the police force. And we have to show that that is real, because I think that broad assumption in this country, particularly in communities of color is it's just impossible no matter what someone does, if they're a police officer, that they'll ever receive real discipline. And that's the thing in our generation we have to break. We have to show that, I believe, the vast majority cops are good and devoted to their work, serving others, but anyone who was proven to violated that oath, to done harm to someone, like the officers did in Minnesota, that has to be swift consequences. And the other problem is the swift part – the justice system inside police departments is glacial, and that's been true here in New York City, and we have to stop it, we have to break through. Even [inaudible] make it tougher in some places, but we have to overcome it.

**O'Donnell:** That's my question, Mr. Mayor. How are you going to do that? You are you – you're the city that made the words “I Can't Breathe” famous in the death of Eric Garner at the hands of NYPD police officers, and the officer who put that chokehold on him and killed Eric Garner was on the NYPD for five years after doing that – that's how long it took New York City to just get that officer fired. In Minneapolis, we saw the officers fired within 24 hours. What's the difference? Why can't New York City do what Minneapolis can do?

**Mayor:** Well, we will from now on. And, Lawrence, and I'm very clear about this. This was a mistake that I have to own – the United States Department of Justice, then during the Obama administration, asked us to defer to them. They literally specifically asked the NYPD not to proceed with a disciplinary trial and produce all the evidence. They wanted to do their own investigation and their own –

**O'Donnell:** Mr. Mayor, can I just stop you there one more time, because there was no disciplinary trial – there was no disciplinary trial in Minneapolis this week. Those officers were fired within 24 hours. Why can they do that in Minneapolis? Why can you not do it in New York City? Is it all about union rules that prevent it?

**Mayor:** Yeah. In some parts of the country, there is no a law or union rule that stops a direct firing. There's also the very important question of whether someone has committed a crime and a District Attorney, a U.S. Attorney, or anyone brings charges – that didn't happen in the Garner case. We all, honestly, looking at what happened, assumed that was the likelihood. No prosecutor – federal, state, none – brought charges. But the fact is, what we learned, Lawrence,

is, we have to take speedy disciplinary action. With all due respect to the prosecutors, we're not waiting on them in the future. We're not listening to them. We're going to take our own action.

**O'Donnell:** New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio, thank you very much for joining us tonight. We really appreciate it.

**Mayor:** Thank you, Lawrence.

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