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**RUSH TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO APPEARS ON “MIDDAYS WITH SHAILA” ON WBL
107.5 FM**

An audio recording of this interview can be found [here](#).

Shaila Scott: 107.5 WBL – that's Joe and his rendition of Adele's Hello. Hopefully you enjoyed it. I know, I did. I love that back to back. I always wanted to do it.

All right. I've always wanted to speak to Mayor de Blasio – and I have the opportunity to speak to him today for the first time. So of course, I've got to make him endure my “60 Seconds with Shaila”. President Obama and Mayor Bloomberg have endured this. Are you ready Mayor de Blasio? It's your turn.

Mayor Bill de Blasio: I am ready.

Shaila: All right. Let's have a little fun. Nickname your mom gave you?

Mayor: Billy.

Shaila: What food do you cook best?

Mayor: Man. Scrambled eggs.

Shaila: Favorite cologne?

Mayor: Once, long ago, I don't use it anymore, but there used to be one called Iquitos, but it was a long time ago.

Shaila: Favorite R&B song.

Mayor: Oh, wow. Luther, “Never Too Much”.

Shaila: One word to describe you.

Mayor: Persistent.

Shaila: If you could be an athlete, what sport would you play and what team would you play for?

Mayor: Baseball. My beloved team of my youth, the Boston Red Sox. I cannot tell a lie.

Shaila: No.

Mayor: Yes. People know this about me. I cannot tell a lie.

Shaila: Shame.

Mayor: Cannot tell a lie.

Shaila: If you can have dinner with anyone living or dead, who would it be?

Mayor: Pope Francis.

Shaila: Well, I'm surprised you didn't have dinner with him when he was here. Okay. Well, what woman would you put on the 10 dollar bill?

Mayor: Harriet Tubman.

Shaila: And, finally, boxers or briefs?

Mayor: Briefs. You know, that's classic.

Shaila: You'll be happy to know that you and Mayor Bloomberg both wear briefs.

Mayor: Well, I see we can agree on something for sure.

Shaila: Yes, at least one thing. Right. Thank you so much for having fun with us in our 60 seconds, but today we will get down to business. We will have several issues we need to address, and we'll address one issue per hour – 11:50, 12:50, and 1:50. And I appreciate you taking the time to talk to us, Mayor. We'll come back with more, on WBLS.

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Shaila: 107.5 WBLS. Good morning. I'm Shaila. Happy Veterans Day – spending a portion of it with Mayor de Blasio, who was addressing certain issues that are of concern to us. Little earlier this week, Norman Seabrook and the Correction Officers' Benevolent Association rallied on the steps of City Hall in the wake of a Rikers officer who was attacked and slashed by inmates. Mayor de Blasio, what is going to be done about this?

Mayor: The corrections officers have a very tough job, and we have tried to change the culture at Rikers Island because bluntly, when we came in here, it was broken. It was dehumanizing to the officers, to the inmates, to everyone, so we've invested a lot to improve the physical plant at Rikers, to create a more secure dynamic with things like security cameras, better screening to keep contraband out, to keep weapons out. We're changing the visitation policies, so that visitors cannot bring in the level of weapons and contraband has become all too normal over the years at Rikers. We are hiring a whole new group of corrections officers, many more than the past, and training them much more intensively. All of this is to get us to a safer environment for the officers and the inmates alike.

And our commissioner, Commissioner Ponte, has added a series of reforms, and in the facilities where he has put those reforms in place, violence has gone way, way down. So we're convinced we're on the right track. But look, there was a horrible incident last week – attack on a corrections officer. I understand why people feel very upset about that, but we are dealing with a situation that was years, if not decades in the making. And we have a very rigorous plan to turn it around, but it does take time.

Shaila: Okay, so, then what's the issue? If you feel there needs to be changes in the correction system and COBA wants change, why can't you agree?

Mayor: Well, historically, I'd had a good working relationship with the union. And I think people are understandably upset because one of their brother officers was attacked.

Shaila: Exactly.

Mayor: And I think there's also a difference on policy. I think there's a lot of folks in the union leadership at least who think we should go back to what's called punitive segregation, which is basically solitary confinement.

We said, both we believe that as an administration, and the Justice Department pushed us very hard on this as well, that we should not have punitive segregation for juveniles, and we shouldn't have them for 18 to 21 year olds. That was not only inhumane, it was ineffective. It actually made people more violent, not less violent.

We have a real policy difference on that with the union, But I believe it's not only a better way to go about rehabilitating people. Remember, it's called the Correction Department for a reason. The idea is to rehabilitate people, and not using massive amounts of solitary confinement is part of how we improve our ability to rehabilitate people. But also, we have a systematic effort to reduce violence, and we have proof that it's working in a number of facilities, amazing drops in violence.

And I think the union leadership has to understand that that model's working, and that's the shape of the future.

Shaila: So, with that being said, are you willing to sit with Norman Seabrook and the members of COBA?

Mayor: Oh, always. Norman Seabrook, the president and I have known each other for many years. We have talked regularly over the 22 months I've been in office. Always be willing sit down.

Shaila: Well, at least now we know the door is open, and I'm hoping COBA will take advantage of that offer, and we can resolve that issue. At 12:50, we will attempt to understand what the mayor is doing about homelessness. Sadly, an issue that is affecting our veterans as well. That's at 12:50 on WBLS.

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Shaila: 107.5 WBLS. Got to give it up for Mayor de Blasio for taking the time to address some of these issues.

And another main concern for New York City residents is homelessness.

Mayor: Yes

Shaila: And residents in SoHo actually flooded the phone lines today. They say that they've seen an increase in homelessness, and it's not just people sleeping on the benches, but also setting up camp sites. I understand that you announced over 52,000 individuals have exited shelter since July 1st, 2014, but we are seeing more of it. Can you tell us why?

Mayor: Yeah. It's an economic reality. I want to talk about the overall picture, and then I want to talk about the SoHo situation.

Shaila: Okay

Mayor: Overall, you are exactly right. The information that came out today – over 50,000 people have exited shelter. And we're talking about since July 1st of last year, so basically even less than 18 months, we've managed to get 50,000 people out of shelter in to better solutions. Now, the fact is that homelessness used to be largely, or much more, a problem related to mental health, substance abuse, other kinds of dysfunction in people's lives.

What we've seen since the Great Recession is more and more homeless is economically-based. It is in fact working people, intact families, finding that the economic reality of their lives just fell apart. They couldn't make the rent, they lost a job, or the job doesn't pay enough to make ends meet. So it's a different reality – we have a very high percentage of families now in shelter much more than we used to. We have a very high percentage of people who are working, or have recently worked.

So this is the result of one, the horrible impact of the Great Recession – the fact that there never was a full recovery. But two, the decline in wages and benefits over a generation for this country. The people are literally earning less proportionally than they used to – and it's really hurting in a place like New York, with the cost of living, and the cost of housing has shot up, in the last decade or two. That's what's happening structurally.

We have as much as we've seen more and more people becoming homeless, we found more and more successful ways to turn the situation around, get them to a better solution, or in many cases, to prevent them from ever ending up out of their home. 90,000 people in the course of this administration sought help from us to either stop an eviction or to get a rental subsidy to keep them in their current apartment. A lot of those folks avoided homelessness in the process.

So we've got better and better tools, but we also have an ongoing serious structural problem.

Shaila: Yes.

Mayor: So that's the big picture. The SoHo situation – look, I want to differentiate, I think it's very important for people to understand this, the difference between what is called a homeless encampment – we've seen those over the years, like, you know a lot of people sleeping in the same place night after night, mattresses, furniture, sadly a lot of drug use --

Shaila: Yes, yes.

Mayor: Couple of months ago, we said we're not going to tolerate that. We found 21 full blown encampments long established, we took them all down, between the NYPD and Department of Homeless Services, they've been taken out altogether. Those folks who were there have been offered drug treatment, they've been offered mental health services, they've been offered a chance to live in safe havens, which are a more informal place, and smaller place than a shelter. A lot of them took up that offer.

What we see now is not that kind of really expensive situation, but we do see situations where one or few homeless people put down a blanket, or put down cardboard boxes, or one thing or the other. If it's obstructing the way people are walking around, and if it's aggressive, if it is anything illegal about it, NYPD will act immediately to stop that. And we've gotten reports and we have one report from SoHo last week, we literally – the situation was resolved the next day.

So, anything illegal, anything that obstruct people's ability to move around, we're going to deal with immediately. That being said, if someone is sitting on a bench for example, minding their own business, or sitting in front of a deli asking for change, but not threatening anyone, not harassing anyone, staying out of the way of people's movements, that's not illegal. And I think part of what has to be clear here is we will deal with any encampment, we'll deal with any disruption, any illegality but at the same time, people do have a right if they're obeying the law, you know, they still have a right to be out there.

Shaila: Well, if they do see an encampment, can they call somewhere?

Mayor: 311. We want the reports to 311 of anything, whether it's an encampment, or anything even temporary. Again, we had a report last week in SoHo, it was taken care of the next day. We had a report the other day about 68th Street, in Broadway on the Upper West Side, was taken care of immediately after we heard the report within hours. People reported in, NYPD and Homeless Services are charged with getting out there, talking to the homeless, trying to get them in a shelter or safe havens, trying to get them treatment, and if they've got any kind of physical obstruction, we will take it away.

Shaila: You know, it seems like with everyone calling 311 for everything, I think there maybe sometimes an overload. Maybe we need to utilize 211, 511, 611 for different issues. That's a whole another conversation. We'll take a break, and at 01:50, we will deal with minimum wage in fast food workers, as well as others.

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107.5, WBSL. Happy Veterans Day. A thousand hugs and kisses going out to our veterans, and our active military. Thank you for everything you do. As we express our gratitude, as John F. Kennedy once said, "We must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them."

We are speaking with Mayor de Blasio today, and I will say a million veterans would benefit from a minimum wage hike. Yesterday, you were in Brooklyn rallying for \$15 minimum wage hike and we just got news that Governor Cuomo announced yesterday that he would unilaterally establish a \$15 minimum wage for all state workers. So now, where does this lead the city workers, the private sector, and just across the board?

Mayor: OK, Let's talk about the State of New York, and the City of New York. I believe that the city should have the right, right this minute to do a \$15 minimum wage for everyone.

Shaila: Everybody.

Mayor: That's what I would do this minute if I have the authority. Under state law, the state has to vote for that, and we've pushed for it and so far with no luck. I'm very hopeful that in this next legislative session next year, we'll have another chance to get that done.

The state did act on the fast food workers, which I think is great, but that's one piece of the puzzle, we need to reach everyone. In terms of city workers, we've already meeting folks, who actually works for New York City, we've already been increasing their pay, so their pay is well ahead of the state minimum wage right now, and it will keep going up, So, we're doing what we can with some of our tools, but what we really need is state legislation to increase the minimum wage across the board.

Shaila: Is there anything that we can do?

Mayor: Yeah. I think – I think you're listeners should let their state assembly members, and their state senators that we need a minimum wage increase. I think it's very, very important to say that this is we – we know nothing will do more to increase income inequality, to keep people from being homeless, to give people a chance to get to the middle class – nothing will do more than increasing wages.

We did a plan, our OneNYC plan. Over the next decade, we project that we can get 800,000 people out of poverty, both with our city efforts, like our affordable housing plan, and our pre-K efforts, which saves a lot of money for families, or after school efforts –

Shaila: Yes it does.

Mayor: It saves a lot of money for families, paid sick leave which we provided to people, but on top of that, we need that wage increase. That has to come from Albany. If we get all those pieces coordinated, we're going to get a lot of people out of poverty. And so, it's time for the state government to act.

Shaila: Just so that you know, the state employee minimum wage hike kicks in in New York City by the end of 2018, and for the rest of the state, at the end of 2021. So, this is not something that's going to happen in next week's paycheck, OK y'all. And we'll be watching this closely as this affects millions of people who want and need a \$15 dollar minimum wage for all. I would assume this will start a national movement too for other states to address, and act accordingly. Next hour, we talk to Mayor de Blasio about the Zadroga Act. Keep it here on WBSL.

107.5, WBSL, work to do Wednesday. That's what this is called. We got a lot of work to do, and we are discussing some issues with Mayor de Blasio, finding out exactly how we're handling them. One being just recently I read, Mayor de Blasio, that twenty four local leaders from around the country have joined you in creating a bipartisan coalition in support of reauthorizing the James Zadroga 9/11 Health and Compensation Act, as a permanent measure, can you tell folks about that?

Mayor: Yeah, it has to be permanent – look, tens of thousands of first responders on 9/11 itself, and in the days or months after, tried to save the lives of people and succeeded in saving so many lives, and then were part of the recovery effort that went on for months. They were not told at the time that their health was in danger.

We all feared what we were smelling in the air there, but the official response from the government was, "Everything is OK. Continue your work." They valiantly went, and participated. Only later did we find how deep the dangers were that they were facing. Well, you know, tens of thousands of folks, now, so many of them suffering from cancer, and other diseases – the Zadroga Act was passed to give them full medical coverage, for any and all ailments related to their 9/11 service, and to continue research related to allow these diseases, and provide monitoring of each first responder. A few weeks back, the Congress let that expire and if it isn't reauthorized very soon, all those first responders will not have the help they need. It's as simple as that. So we gathered with the members of our New York City congress members, a bipartisan group, just like those mayors, and other local leaders, we got together, bipartisan. We said, "The Zadroga Act should be not only renewed, but made permanent –"

Shaila: Permanent, right.

Mayor: And by the way, here's the amazing fact, I don't think most people know this, in that rescue and recovery efforts, that went on for months, literally, people came from all 50 states, from all but two congressional districts in the entire country, so four hundred and thirty three. I think it is congressional districts were represented amongst the folks, the first responders who came to help, truly, national response to an attack on this country, which is what happened on 9/11, an attack on New York City for sure, but also, it's clearly an attack on the entire United States. So, the first responders thought as their moral obligation, they're patriotic duty, they thought, "We're all in this together," that's how they comported themselves. Well, we want Washington to think the same way, and be there for our first responders. This is not a New York City issue, this is a national issue, and a patriotic issue.

Shaila: And this of course comes sadly after the loss of many, including Lieutenant Marci Sims, who died from 9/11 related illness.

Mayor: Just in the last days, we lost Lieutenant Sims and she was an outstanding member of the NYPD, and someone with a bright, bright future, who epitomized that sacrifice. I mean, literally as we're calling on congress to act, we lose another hero and I hope that she did not die in vain, that her example will remind the members of congress on both sides of the isle that they have to make this a permanent support for these first responders.

Shaila: You know Mayor, I want to reiterate what you just said because a lot of people think that this is just a New York and New Jersey issue. While the New York, New Jersey area had the largest number of people affected, people from all over the country came to New York to help in the rescue and recovery effort. This is an American issue, a nationwide issue and we've got to act, and get it done.

I think Mr. Mayor that we all want a city that works. Everybody is not going to agree with everything you do. Any leader knows that, but what would you suggest we do in order to help you in doing your job?

Mayor: Well, I do think it's tremendously helpful when the people of this city call 311 and tell us what they see, if they need something, if they see something. There's so many things that can be done through 311. You know how passionate I am about pre-K, any family that still doesn't have pre-K, they still can go to 311. When we see a homeless person in need of help, they should call 311.

We, as, you know have talked about, we want to get homeless folks off the street, and to the help they need. It's very helpful when citizens call in, and tell us what they see. And on so many other fronts, the people communicating with our government telling us what they need, and what they see, always helps us.

Shaila: As long as you stay out of that Boston Red Sox uniform, I won't call 311 on you, and have you removed, OK?

Mayor: Shaila, I missed my calling, you know I missed my moment for that, so I guess this will be my form of public service.

Shaila: And we can never thank you too much for that. We're going to play your favorite R&B song Mayor de Blasio, and thank you for taking the time to talk to us today.

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