



THE CITY OF NEW YORK  
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**RUSH TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO DELIVERS REMARKS AT ISLAMIC CENTER OF BRIGHTON BEACH**

**Mayor Bill de Blasio:** Thank you so much. It is a great honor to be with you today, and, of course, I will begin by saying *salaam alaikum*.

**Audience:** *Wa-Alaikum-Salaam.*

**Mayor:** I want to thank your wonderful president, Abdul Amar, for his leadership. I want to thank Imam Sheikh Sharif ul Islam for his leadership. And we're honored of course to be joined by members of the Muslim Officer Society, we thank them for their good work. I thank your local councilman, Chaim Deutsch, for being here and my Commissioner for Community Affairs, Marco Carrión.

I want to tell you it's of course an honor to be at the Brighton Beach Islamic Center, and I appreciate this chance to speak to you. I'll speak briefly but it's on something very, very important, so I thank you for giving me a few moments. But before I speak about the issues we face today, we are a blessed in New York City today to have a great visitor – and Lassana Bathily has become a – a person who's famous now all over the world, a real hero because he stood up to protect human life even when his own life is in danger. In a moment that became of international importance – the tragedy in Paris earlier this year – it's a moment when so much feeling attended to the moment because people were thinking so deeply about how, how are we going to live together in this world, people of all different faiths and all different views and all different ethnicities.

And, the attacks on Paris were painful, but in the midst of that pain there were so many examples of the desire of human beings to rise above, and overcome divisions, and stand up one for another as members of a human race. And Lassana inspires us, because he protected people, people who didn't necessarily come from the same country, or practice the same faith, or have the same skin color, but for Lassana, they were fellow human beings worthy of protection. And his example has now encouraged people all over the world to believe we can overcome those differences and find unity as we work to everyday in this city.

So, we are so blessed to have you with us. And I want to present a proclamation to Lassana. Thank you so much. *Si vu ple*. Lassana, today, by this proclamation – today, in the city of New York, June 12th, 2015, we proclaim it Lassana Bathily Day in New York City.

[Applause]

I will – I will say to Lassana in the language he fully understands *merci beaucoup*. *Merci beaucoup*. Thank you so much.

I will, again, be very brief, but I want to thank you. I've spoken to people all over this community over the last few years about the challenges we face. When I saw [inaudible] I talked about the tale of two cities – inequalities that still grip us. It's been my mission to overcome those inequalities. And that takes many forms. It was important that we make sure the Eid holidays were recognized by our school system. That was one way of overcoming inequality, and that was necessary. There are so many other challenges, and many of the greatest

challenges when it comes to inequality are the economic challenges. The fact that so many people work so hard and can barely survive in this city, which is not the New York City that so many of us have known for years and decades. Most of us who came here or who grew up here knew a New York City that was open to all – not perfect, not without prejudice, but a city that at least you could find a place to live in, you could find a job, you could find opportunity. You could afford to live in the neighborhood that you cared about, that your family was a part of. And now, for the first time in our history, that is threatened profoundly. And I imagine everyone in this room could tell their own story of people about you know who were forced out of their neighborhood, couldn't afford their home anymore, lost the home that they loved, sometimes because they were harassed by unscrupulous landlords, sometimes because the cost of housing just sky housing beyond their reach.

This is a crisis in this city. And if working people – good, honest working people can't afford to live in New York City, it's not New York City anymore. It's not a city for everyone. It's not the city that attracted so many of you and your forbearers to come here and build something great. This city is great because it is open to all, so that the strength, the magic comes for including everyone. If it becomes exclusive – if it becomes a guided city only for those of great wealth, it won't be the New York City we believe in. So, we have an opportunity in these next very few days to fight for a New York City for all, because in our state capital in Albany, decisions will be made – literally in just the next few days – that will affect all of us. Two million of us live in rent controlled and rent-stabilized apartments, and that very concept of protecting working people and ensuring a fair rent – that very concept may be lost in Albany in our state capital if we don't make our voices heard. I'm asking you to let your leaders in Albany, and the Assembly, and the Senate, and the governor know how much we have to continue rent regulation – in fact, strengthen it, because you know so many people right now are losing their homes. We're watching apartments that were affordable for working people – for a hard-working family no longer within reach. We're watching apartment after apartment because luxury apartments only where we've lost literally hundreds of thousands of units of affordable housing in just the last few decades. We can't keep doing that. So, we have to call upon Albany to act, to continue rent regulation, and to strengthen rent regulation.

And while we're at it, let's build more affordable housing. Let's build more affordable housing in every community. I have called for a plan that makes sure that when we spend our tax dollars – everyone in this room is a taxpayer – when we spend our tax dollars, that we get back what we deserve. When any developer builds and wants tax credits, we want affordable housing in return for that. We need affordable housing for our communities. I've said in my plan that those who are doing very well – people who can afford a home – millions of dollars – that they should pay a little more in taxes so we can build more affordable housing for everyone else, so we can actually keep this is a city for everyone.

I want to tell you, just the other day – just a few weeks ago, one condominium apartment sold in Midtown Manhattan for \$48 million dollars – one apartment – one apartment. How many of us would it take – add up all our salaries, would we get to \$48 million dollars? I don't know. I can tell you one thing – if one apartment – if someone is wealthy enough to afford a \$48 million dollar apartment, they can pay a little more in taxes for affordable housing for everyone else so it's a city for everyone.

So, brothers and sisters, we need – we need to make sure – we need to make sure that Albany acts – that Albany acts in favor of the people. Your voices will matter. Your voices will matter. They have to hear your voices saying this is about me, this is about my family, this is about my neighborhood – my community – that we need affordable housing for all.

I will finish by telling you this city government will work every day for you. We will use every tool, every power we have to create affordable housing. But in our state capital is so much more power that could help us, or hurt us. If Albany is on the side of working people, they will continue and strengthen rent regulation for all our families. If Albany wants to help us build affordable housing, they'll pass the mansion tax, they'll let us get the resources we need by asking those who have done so well, who are so wealthy, to help the average working person have a place to live. If Albany wants to be part of the solution, they have that chance in the next few days. And the fear is that they will walk away. The fear is they'll leave us, losing every day more and more affordable housing. But I believe in the voice of the people, I really do. I believe in the voice of the people. I

believe in the voice of this community and every community that makes up New York City. So, help me make your voices heard louder than ever. Let's protect the kind of neighborhoods we believe in, where everyone has an opportunity.

Thank you so much for this chance to be with you, and I want to wish everyone a blessed Ramadan. *Alaikum-Salaam*.

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