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**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO DELIVERS REMARKS AT CELEBRATION TO  
KICK OFF CONSTRUCTION OF THE MARCY HOUSES' COMMUNITY CENTER**

**Mayor Bill de Blasio:** Let's give a round of applause to Alexis.

[Applause]

Great job. So, Alexis, today is about you and all the other young people here at Marcy who deserve this kind of opportunity, and it's long overdue but we're finally getting it done. So, it's going to be a good thing for the young people of this community.

And I want to thank – there's so many people here who have been working for years to get us to this day. You're going to hear from some of the elected officials and I want to give them a lot of credit for their energy and their persistence. But I want to give credit to the whole community. People have fought for justice for Marcy for a long time. Give each other a round of applause.

[Applause]

To the members of my administration – people have been putting real energy into this effort because they understand it's a matter of fairness and something like this takes real work. So, I want to thank and acknowledge leaders of my administration and their whole teams who have been a part of this.

Bill Chong, our Commissioner for the Department of Youth and Community Development.  
Thank you to you and your team.

[Applause]

Ana Barrio, our Acting Commissioner for DDC. Thank you to you and your team.

[Applause]

The General Manager of the public housing authority of this city – the General Manager of NYCHA, Vito Mustaciuolo. Thank you very much for all you and your team are doing.

[Applause]

Some special guests are here. I want to acknowledge and thank an icon of this community, former Assembly Member Annette Robinson. Thank you so much for joining us.

[Applause]

I know Congresswoman Nydia Velazquez is represented ably by her staff. Thank you so much.

[Applause]

And an organization I think very highly of that does so much to keep the community safe – I believe members of S.O.S Bed-Stuy are here. Is that right? Thank you. Give them all a round of applause for the great work you do.

[Applause]

Here is the reality. I don't need to tell everyone this but some people will be hearing this for the first time. For decades, young people here at Marcy needed a place to learn and grow and they did not have it. And we know the extraordinary talent of the young people here in this community.

We've seen some famous names come out of this community but there's a lot of kids that aren't famous but they're just as talented. They have just as bright futures and those futures have to be nurtured. We needed a place for that to happen. People knew that. They fought for it. Members of the community called for this community center for years and years but tragically to no avail.

We recognize there are some wrongs that need to be righted in our city. So, the status quo was that the children of Marcy did not have a place and now they will have that place. And it's a reminder when the community stands up and fights, the community can win.

[Applause]

It was crucial that you had elected officials who believed in this and made it a priority. I can tell you that when you hear from someone over and over about something, you can tell it's in their heart and how much they care about it. And I can say that about Council Member Cornegy, for sure. I want to thank him for his very powerful leadership.

[Applause]

And I thank the Borough President and I thank the State Senator. Everyone believed this was crucial for the community. We – we're ready to join them and it comes down to a matter of fairness. It comes down to saying to our children that they matter.

I've often said you can tell if you are well-regarded and if you're respected because you are invested in. Where there's investment, it means you matter. That's what I felt so strongly for example in our pre-K program and our 3-K program. We're communicating to those precious young children they matter because we're investing in them getting a great start.

By the way, we have some of the folks here from our pre-K outreach team and 3-K outreach. Thank you for the great work you're doing.

[Applause]

And anybody, a reminder, if you have any four year olds in your life, you want to see those folks in those t-shirts.

So, you know when you're being invested in but you also unfortunately, people have known what it felt like to be ignored and they know what it felt like to be left behind. We wanted to right that wrong.

So, we are turning an abandoned building into a place where no child will ever feel abandoned. That's what we're doing here today. And the skills that young people develop will make their future much, much brighter. They'll be in a safe, nurturing environment when they're in this center. And this is not just about a building, again, it's not just saying okay, Marcy Houses deserved a community center. It is about fairness. It's about opening that door for every child. From day one, we have said in this administration that we will not accept the status quo when it came to public housing. 400,000 New Yorkers live in public housing but decades and decades went by without proper investment, not just in community centers, but in everything else. In the last four years, this administration added to NYCHA \$3.7 billion in new investments. \$3.7 billion.

[Applause]

We recently made a decision, to invest another billion dollars on top of that, to try and solve some of the long standing problems. We're doing these things willingly because it's the right thing to do. And change can come, and I've seen it. I've been to the buildings where mold was stopped dead in its tracks because we put in new roofs. And I know people will have more heat this coming winter because we're putting in new boilers. And we made an announcement this week that we're not going to approach this very painful issue of lead the same way it was approached in the past. We're going to apply, to the question of lead, the same approach we've applied to stopping traffic fatalities – we call it Vision Zero. And the idea is to end the problem, once and for all. And this is a city where we've made tremendous progress. Thank God that lead exposure levels have gone down 90 percent since 2005. This city, our Health Department, we give them a lot of credit. HPD, NYCHA, we are driving down lead exposure, but we need to end it once and for all so every parent and every child can know they're safe.

These are the kinds of things we need to do for 400,000 people. I want to remind people this is about the future of the city we love, and the character of this city. If New York City is not a place for everyone, it's not New York City anymore. If people, who have been a part of a community for generations in many cases, can't live decently and stay in their own neighborhood, it's New York City. And so when you really think about it, to protect New York City it means we have to protect NYCHA, because it's part of heart and soul of who we are. That's what today is really about – a brighter future for these wonderful, young children, but even bigger than that, investing in public housing so it will be there for people for generations to come.

I just want to say a few words in Spanish.

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

Now I want to turn to a man who was incessant in his advocacy for Marcy. It doesn't matter how tall he is, his voice is strong but he's impossible to miss in a crowd, and he has – every council member gets an opportunity to put together some resources and apply it in a community and make choices about it. His choice speaks volumes about his priority, because he didn't just say I want to do a little something for Marcy. He put together \$3 million for this effort. Council Member Robert Cornegy.

[Applause]

[...]

**Mayor:** So, I want to just say, it's really beautiful to be a part of this celebration, and it's particularly beautiful because it is an affirmation of the hard work of so many people here in this community – and folks who did the work, including, as we heard, some who are no longer here with us to see their victory, but who we honor nonetheless. So, this is something beautiful and powerful.

Now, I've got to seek to another issue, and there's a phrase that says – from the sublime to the ridiculous. To me, this is the sublime. This is a beautiful, positive thing that we've talked about here at Marcy. What I'm about to talk to you about is the ridiculous, and it may not surprise some of you to know that the thing that is ridiculous comes from the Trump administration.

So, I want to address absolutely ridiculous allegations made this week by the United States Customs and Border Patrol. Last month, I went down to Texas. Like so many people in this city and this country, I was repulsed by a policy of family separation, taking children away from their parents. By the way, those children overwhelmingly have not been reunited with their parents yet – a broken and horrendous policy – and I went down there with mayors, Republicans and Democrats alike, to try to inspect the site where these children were being held in a town called Torneo, on the Texas border.

A group of elected officials from around the country – we politely asked the federal authorities for access to the facility to make sure the kids were okay. That was denied. That was denied to the mayors, that was denied previously to the United States Senators and to members of Congress, which makes no sense – that something paid for with our tax dollars, our representatives were not even allowed to see.

So, we were not given access to the children or to the facilities, but we were there to understand what was going on, and we wanted to get whatever view we could of this tent city that was literally created in the middle of the desert to house these children.

My security detail raised this issue to the border agents, said that we wanted to get a different view of this tent city. The border agents consulted with their supervisor and they agreed, and they let our cars cross the American border into Mexico at a normal checkpoint. While we were there, we were told where the border line was, and we respected it. We came back the exact same

way, both times showed passports, went through with the approval of the agents at the entry point. At no point did we disregard any instructions from federal authorities, period.

So why suddenly, weeks later, is this letter showing up from the federal government? Well, it is another attempt to distract from an inhumane policy. You can tell when our federal government is doing something that's hurting people, they don't want that to be the focus of attention. So now, trying to get the attention off of a policy literally called family separation, they're trying once again to distract. They have separated these families and they have no real plan to reunite them.

So, here is my message to President Trump, and it's a message I can say on behalf of the people of his hometown – we simply won't stand for this. We won't stand for a policy that separates children from their parents. I won't stand for it. This is the ultimate city of immigrants. We respect everybody. So, I won't stand for this policy, and I won't be silent, and I won't accept any effort to intimidate. I will not sit idly by as the President rips children from their families. And I will not let him continue his efforts to destroy the lives of these young people.

Threats by the Trump administration will not stop me from speaking out and they won't stop my fellow mayors from speaking out, and they won't stop every-day New Yorkers and Americans from speaking out. So I'm going to keep saying what I have been saying, sending kids 2,000 miles away from their parents is wrong. These children must be reunited immediately with their families. And I won't stop telling the truth about ICE – that agency is broken, it is creating fear and division. It can no longer be a productive part of this country. It's time has come and gone.

[Applause]

That's what there is to say on that matter. Thank you, everyone, for being here today, and congratulations to the whole Marcy community.

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