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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** September 10, 2015  
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**RUSH TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO DELIVERS REMARKS AT FUNERAL SERVICE FOR  
ASSISTANT DEPUTY WARDEN BELINDA NICKS**

**Mayor Bill de Blasio:** We gather today with heavy hearts. We gather because of a very painful loss. But we also gather to celebrate an absolutely beautiful life.

**Unknown:** Absolutely.

**Mayor:** I've heard stories, but even if I hadn't heard the stories, I would've known just looking at the pictures in the program that Deputy – excuse me, Assistant Deputy Warden Belinda Nicks led a beautiful, powerful, purposeful, positive life. And so many people in this sanctuary today were bettered by her presence, uplifted by her presence.

We celebrate her life even amidst our pain.

Our thoughts and prayers are with all of her family and all of her loved ones, all of her friends, all her fellow officers, because they were her family as well – her second family, the Department of Corrections.

**Unknown:** Amen.

**Mayor:** I want to particularly express my condolences on behalf of the people of New York City to some of her closest family members – her sister Sandra Bascom, her brother Irving Nicks, her sister Rita Patrick, her sister Janice Lewis, and to her many nieces and nephews – and I particularly want to thank and commend her niece Keisha Nicks –

**Unknown:** Yeah!

**Mayor:** Department of Corrections Captain Keisha Nicks – we thank you for all you do.

[Applause]

People are here – so many people are here – from the Department of Corrections, because they feel this loss so deeply. And beyond that, elected officials are here, community leaders are here, labor leaders are here, clergy from beyond this house of worship are here – all united in celebrating this life, showing respect and paying tribute – and I think you all.

Belinda was a ray of warmth and kindness. I think if you looked up the definition of a radiant smile, you would see a picture of Belinda Nicks. She truly devoted her life to uplifting others – for nearly three decades, selflessly serving as one of New York's Boldest.

She began at the rank of correction officer, but it was clear early on that would not be her last rank, because she had that spirit, that leadership quality, that energy. She worked hard. She climbed up the ranks. She rose to the position of Assistant Deputy Warden.

And she believed in the mission. The phrase “Department of Correction” something we have to always keep coming back to. You could’ve chosen many names for this crucial agency, but the word “correction” conforms with a concept so dear to this church – the concept of redemption. That is the business of the Department of Correction. It is not easy. We ask all those who work for the department, each day, to try and redeem human souls who’ve gone astray. I think our brothers and sisters in the clergy might know a thing or two about that challenge.

**Unknown:** Amen.

**Mayor:** But that’s what every one of you in uniform does. Commissioner Ponte, all the leadership, we thank you, because you are in the redemption business too.

Belinda understood that, devoted herself to it, exemplified it through her spirit.

Now, she had other options. As you see in her biography, she could’ve pursued business, she could’ve pursued the law, but instead she pursued redemption and correction. And then was not a wallflower – was not just one of the group, but was an example to all.

She was a friend to so many, a confidante, a mentor, because that was her sense of mission.

We know there’s no such thing as a correction officer who has an easy job, but what I heard is when Belinda was around, the job felt easier.

**Unknown:** Amen.

**Mayor:** It made more sense. Can I get an amen for that?

**Audience:** Amen.

**Mayor:** I think a lot of people in this room understand, from your own experience, how she lifted up the people around her. You could always tell when she was nearby, because on top of that radiant smile she had an unmistakable laugh that rang out. It filled the room. That laughter, that smile – it was infectious. It made everyone else feel a little better, put them at their ease, gave them a little more hope.

She was deeply respected by all – all the people who worked at the department, all the officers – they described her as the department’s heartbeat and a mother to all.

And even inmates who have taken the wrong turn in life started to move back towards the right path because of the motherly and positive love that Belinda exhibited.

If you were a newer officer, she was there for you. She wanted to show you what could be achieved through this work. She wanted to lead. And as my wife, our first lady, always reminds me – she uses a very powerful phrase – she says, “Don’t tell me – show me.” Well, Belinda showed people what it was like to be a colleague, to be a friend, to be a mentor, and turn lives around.

She would show the newcomers everything they needed to know – how to write the right reports, how to do the work the right way, how to work together, how to exhibit teamwork.

She went out of her way to help people out. If someone needed a ride home, if someone needed a ride to work, she always went out of her way, because that’s how she lived life.

Now, I think we can say safely, even off duty, Belinda was no wallflower. She didn’t just like to hang out and watch TV. In fact, she loved to travel. She loved to travel. She traveled with gusto, with energy, and a love of

life. And she loved places that were like her – that were warm and radiant. Aruba, Acapulco, Hawaii, Saint Maarten – anywhere the sun was shining, she had the sand beneath her feet – there you’d find her. And she didn’t just sit on the beach. She was an adventurer. She was eager to try anything and everything that life had to offer. In fact, on a recent trip to Hawaii, she woke up at midnight, took a bus to the top of 10,000-foot volcano to watch the sunrise. But that wasn’t all – she then decided to take a mountain bike and go down the volcano the other way. That, my friends, is something we call a love of life and living life to the fullest.

So, the travel, the friends, everything that mattered to her brought her joy. Her beloved dog, Layla, brought her joy. Dancing brought her joy. And I am told she had a particular fondness for the extraordinary works of Chaka Khan – and her love of house music. So much life and so much to miss.

So, we are mourning. Of course we feel the pain. But isn’t it something to be able to celebrate someone at the same time? To be able to recognize what she achieved and how she lived in those years she was given?

We all need to remember how to live with some of the joy that Belinda showed us every day.

One of her fellow officers recognized that Belinda is still with us in so many ways, and will always be with us. The officer said, “We’ve gained a guardian angel in spirit.” But we know Belinda is watching over all of us with love, and care, with compassion.

But all the men and women of the Department of Correction, someday you may be having a tough day, you may need a little inspiration. Just remember, Belinda’s watching over you. She’s the example you can draw on every single day.

And we know that her memory will bring something to her family, her friends, her colleagues – it will bring happiness. It will bring joy. It will bring courage. It will bring strength. When we need to remember what’s right, just remember her beautiful smile.

Thank you, and God bless you all.

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