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**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO, POLICE COMMISSIONER SHEA HOLD
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Mayor Bill de Blasio: This morning, I'm going to speak very plainly about what is happening in this country, in this city, and it begins with an acknowledgment that there is a poison in this land, there is something profoundly wrong, and in so many ways we pretend to see it, pretend to address it but we don't do it in a deep and meaningful way. And that's why we are experiencing everything we are experiencing. There is a poison of structural racism. It haunts the lives of people of color every day in this country, in this city – every day. And I want to speak as someone who acknowledges my own reality as a white male, acknowledges that privilege, acknowledges that I can only understand so much. But I know enough to say that for so many people of color and particularly members of the Black community. Every day is pervaded by racism, that hatred lurks around the corner at all times. From the moment people become conscious of the world around them to the day they leave they know racism as a constant, as a weight, as a pain. And that anger and frustration, the fear, the confusion that comes with that is part of people's lives, that must be expressed and acted on because you just have to acknowledge we can't go on like this. And I'm talking to everyone but I am particularly talking to white New Yorkers to say we can't go on like this.

We can't have so many of our fellow New Yorkers live in pain throughout their lives, and then have that pain deepened over and over and over again. So, let's be clear, the coronavirus crisis has created a depth of pain that still has not been accounted for. So many New Yorkers have lost someone but that is particularly true in communities of color and particularly true in the African American community. That loss, that loss is being felt so deeply because everyone knows it's not based on equality, it wasn't that everyone lost the same way, communities of color lost so much more. When I walked through Queensbridge Houses in Queens on Monday, I heard the most painful stories of people who had lost loved ones and could not even mourn them because of this crisis. And the fact that I heard story after story after story in just one walk-through, one housing development, spoke volumes about how much pain there is out there and then you add the horrible insult of that video of Amy Cooper – the epitome of American white racism in one video, her allegation being, her indictment being that there was a Black man in her midst. Literally criminalizing the very act of being a Black man. That's what we saw before our eyes and it brought up, for so many people, the fundamental contradiction that pervades our society, that until we heal it we can't move forward. We just can't. It will just tear at us and tear at us.

And then the entire nation watches George Floyd killed in broad daylight by someone who is supposed to protect us with no concern at all, his killer seemed to have no emotion about the fact that he was killing a Black man as if there was no value in that man. And unfortunately, that's

what the history of this country has taught too many people and we have to stop it. So, I'm beginning by saying that raw pain, anger, frustration it gets brought up so deeply in moments like this but it's an every day, every hour thing for Black New Yorkers, for Latino New Yorkers, for so many people who deal with the pain of racism, pervasive in their lives.

Now, last night there were protests. I was in Brooklyn with Commissioner Shea and these protests brought up a lot of issues that we have to address. We have spent years changing the nature of policing in this city and we have much, much more to do. We all know that. And last night was a difficult, complex situation. I'm going to speak about what our officers went through but I first want to say there were people who came there to peacefully protest, there were others who came there obviously to try and incite acts of violence. But it's our obligation as the City government, it's the NYPD's obligation to find the best possible way to keep peace, to protect everyone, to avoid anything that allows further violence to occur but that means also recognizing that any aggressive act towards a peaceful protestor sends exactly the wrong message. It's wrong in every way but it also sets us back.

There were elected officials at this protest, some of whom were pepper sprayed. What a horrible, horrible situation that the people who represent us, who are there on behalf of their community peacefully observing, trying to help keep the peace, that they ended up being victims of pepper spraying. That's unacceptable and we need to understand exactly why that happened. There needs to be accountability. We've seen some videos that do not reflect the philosophy of this city, the values of this city, the values of this administration, do not reflect the values of the NYPD. We've seen some videos where protestors were handled very violently and very roughly, and that is not neighborhood policing and we will not accept that kind of behavior from any police officer.

But I'll tell you, at the same time, we saw acts of violence from protestors that have nothing to do with the tradition of peaceful, democratic protest that has pervaded the history of New York City. New York City honors the right to protest. The NYPD has protected protestors for generations of every point of view and done it well but some protestors last night came with an agenda of violence and incitement and they meant to harm police officers and they did harm police officers. They meant to attack police vehicles and they did. They meant to attack police precincts and that is all purely unacceptable. It does not reflect our values. We will not accept that. I want to remind everyone that the man and woman on the beat made a decision to join the police in the name of peace. They are not the policy-makers, they are the people trying to protect their fellow New Yorkers. They were subjected to horrible, vile things last night and tremendous violence and that will not stand. Because they are working men and women and any protestor who tries to take the humanity away from a police officer and devalue them just because they are a public servant is no better than the racists who devalue people of color and particularly black men in America.

So, if you're a peaceful protestor, we will go to the ends of the Earth to protect your right to protest, whatever your viewpoint. We will always make sure you have that right but if you are there to incite violence we cannot and will not allow that. A lot happened last night. I could tell from being there how much was happening, how complex it was, how dangerous the situation was. We need to get to the bottom of exactly what happened and how we can do things better.

I'm going to initiate an independent review immediately of the events of last night. I will announce the details later on today but I want to know exactly what happened, why it happened, and what can be done better. I want there to be accountability for anyone, whatever their status, but I also want to know what we can do better to avoid any acts of violence and we are working as we speak today to make sure that the protests in the days to come will be as peaceful as humanly possible, that there will be different protocols and approaches to ensure the right to protest is honored and that everyone can do so in a peaceful manner.

I also want to say that we will engage community leaders and community members immediately to determine how to approach protests better and differently. We're going to engage members of the Cure Violence Movement who have done outstanding work in their neighborhoods stopping violence to work on how to make sure protests occur without violence as well. We're going to reach to the grassroots, elected officials, community leaders, Cure Violence Movement leaders to determine the best way in the weeks and months ahead to honor the rights of all New Yorkers and keep the peace simultaneously. It was a long and difficult night and we intend to do better. With that, I'll turn to Commissioner Dermot Shea –

Police Commissioner Dermot Shea: Thank you, Mr. Mayor. So, across the city the last two nights we have had demonstrations. At times those demonstrations have turned violent, unfortunately. This is, in my view, something we have seen across American cities. In the last two days and specifically last night in Brooklyn we had a protest of approximately 3,000 individuals that was splintered into several smaller protests. During the course of the evening I can tell you that we affected over 200 arrests. We have multiple officers injured. I can tell you some of the things that those officers encountered. We had Molotov cocktails recovered. We had an arrest affected for attempted murder of four police officers by an individual throwing a Molotov cocktail into an occupied marked police van. We had a firearm recovered, we had brass knuckles recovered, we had countless bricks and other items thrown at police officers. Again, this was a volatile, as the Mayor said, dangerous situation and any and all violence we denounce. We can do better than this and we must. We fully support – and I want to thank all the police officers, all the members of the community, all the elected officials that were out either working the event last night or demonstrating peacefully. And that's the key word here, peacefully. We fully remain committed to supporting the right to publicly assemble, to protest, to free speech, this is at the heart of everything, everything that we believe in. But at the same time, we will have zero tolerance for individuals looking to cause harm to anyone and unfortunately, we saw that repeatedly last night as well.

Mayor: Okay, we're going to take a few questions.

Moderator: First is Myles from NBC4. Myles –

Question: Commissioner, good morning. Mr. Mayor, good morning. There was a video showing the – right outside the Barclay Center where protestors appear to be shoved without provocation. There was a woman who talked to us last night who was shoved, sort of into the sidewalk with the captain of the local precinct standing by. She has a concussion and she says she did nothing wrong. I mean what do – when you see these things, that video is all over social media, what is your response to that.

Mayor: Myles, it's absolutely unacceptable. I have participated in many peaceful protests and many situations where protestors and police understood what the ground rules were and people abided by those ground rules. But anytime you see a protestor just arbitrarily thrown to the ground by a police officer, that does not reflect our values, that's unacceptable and there need to consequences. Now, I'm the first to say our officers were in a horrible situation last night for the very reason that Commissioner Shea just pointed out. Some in that crowd aimed to do violence and they directed that violence towards law enforcement officers who had done nothing to them and that's, to me, one of the underlying realities we have to come to grips with. A city of over 8 million people and a few thousand people were protesting and within that a very small number literally and specifically meant to incite violence and that poisoned the whole atmosphere.

But that does not for a moment take away from the fact that the NYPD has to do better. We cannot see a video like that. There's no reason for a video like that and it corrodes trust. So, we're going to have an independent review to look at each and every instance like that. There will be accountability. There will be accountability also on the side of the protestors, I assure you. But we have to keep people's faith that the NYPD is here to protect them, period. And we have to do better than that.

Moderator: Mark from CNN is up next. Mark –

Question: Good morning, guys. How are you doing today?

Mayor: Good. How are you, Mark?

Question: Good, good. I wanted to ask, what locations are you guys going to be at today? What are the protest locations that are going to – that are really grabbing your attention? And if you could talk a little bit about who the people are in the crowd. I know that there has been some talk of some of these folks being from out of town or another location, and some people obviously being local. But what is the make-up of the folks that you're seeing at these protests?

Mayor: Mark, I'll start and I'll turn to the Commissioner about the locations and what he is seeing in terms of the composition of the protest. But I just want to start with a very simple point. And again, this is common sense – and I know the people of this city, and I know the vast majority of people when they hear this they will understand it and relate to it. We have all seen what peaceful protesting looks like. We have seen the NYPD many, many times manage a peaceful protest without any incident whatsoever. Or if people choose to get arrested in a planned civil disobedience, that it's handled in a careful, thoughtful manner, the way everyone understood it would. That's the typical reality in this city. When you see something like last night, it indicates that something very different is going on. And again, some people came there to do violence. That is not – a lot of people went there just to protest what they saw as an intolerable reality in this country, in this city that needs to change. And I honor their right to protest. I think a lot of people there went because they had something to express and they had no knowledge of the fact that there was a small number of people in that crowd that came to do violence. So, a lot of the peaceful individuals were put in a horrible situation. A lot of police

were put in a horrible situation by that very few. But that does not mean we do not have to do better. We always have to do better because we are here to protect the peaceful protestors.

Commissioner Shea: Just to expand on that, the civil disobedience is key here. We fully support – and I spoke to many individuals over the course of the evening last night into the early morning hours about the right to protest and how we conduct protest training, how we conduct our details to allow people to peacefully assemble. We take great pride actually in how we conduct and allow people to express their concerns about any number of issues. And certainly, this is such a passionate issue right now just in New York City but across the country. And I encourage and I think it's a great thing that large crowds are assembling for this cause, and to get to the bottom of what we can do better as a society – all of us, in law enforcement and in society in general. But coming to an assembly premeditated with loaded firearms, with bricks, with Molotov cocktails, is the furthest thing possible from civil disobedience. We work with crowds in all types of areas, arenas from every ethnicity, from every cause across this city literally 365 days a year.

We express extreme patience. We take pride in our training. We allow people to march. We work with them. We are flexible. We practice de-escalation but it is very difficult to practice de-escalation when you're having a brick thrown at you, at your head. We have countless, and that is accurate, countless officers at this point still tallying how many were injured from last night, in the emergency room as we speak. We've had incidents of officers' teeth knocked out. No discrimination whether it's an African American officer, a white officer, a male officer, a female officer – just officers attacked because of their uniform. We've had officers, as I said, sitting in a marked police van and a Molotov cocktail lit – it is by the grace of God, and I've said that unfortunately before, that we don't have dead officers today. So, this, like no other time that I can think, is a time that all of us need to continue talking, marching. We encourage it peacefully and come to solutions, not just in New York City but across this country. But the answer for violence should not be violence or murder. And that is a mistake. And I think anyone that sees it needs to condemn it because it will not get us where we want to be.

Mayor: [Inaudible]

Commissioner Shea: Yeah, sorry. We have a number of protests planned. The reality of what we are seeing historically is we have planned protests. We have unplanned protests, we will be flexible. We have a number of protests in different boroughs that are possibly going to take off today. What we're seeing in terms of who is involved, again it's good New Yorkers coming out and we think that's a good thing, as I've just said. Many times, we have a lot of people that we see, unfortunately, from out of town. We have, unfortunately, as predictable as the sun coming up, people that come from out of town with one intention, unfortunately, to commit violence. They've done it before in New York City and other cities. And we're seeing some of those individuals at this time in New York City. And that's some of the violence that we're seeing. But we will be ready, the men and women of the department will be out there today. We will be deployed throughout New York City to make sure, first and foremost, that we keep everyone safe – members of this department, members of the community members that want to express rage at some of the things that we're seeing. And we think all of that again is something that we should be out there to protect.

Moderator: Next is Katie from the Wall Street Journal. Katie –

Question: Hi. Good morning, I wanted to get the – get your reaction Mr. Mayor and Commissioner Shea, on – talk a little bit more about the videos shown of the violence from police officers. There was criticism from some elected officials. I think Public Advocate Jumaane Williams said that just the sheer show of force of so many police officers outside the Barclay Center kind of set a precedence for that. So, Commissioner Shea and the Mayor, would you comment on the videos of the police violence and your thoughts on that? And if you have any update on protesters injured and then if there's any disciplinary action for the police officers –

Mayor: Katie, let me break that down for a moment. The Commissioner will speak to any specific numbers he has and obviously how the Police Department goes about its own review. As I said, we will initiate an independent review of the entire incident to determine what happened and if there are specific acts of accountability that need to occur as a result of this. And we'll do that very, very quickly. I'll announce more details later on today. Now, the individual videos, I've seen them too. And to me, they are unacceptable. Anytime a police officer and I totally understand what a horrible, complex, difficult situation it was for our officers, but that does not in any way justify throwing a peaceful protestor to the ground. That kind of thing is unacceptable and we have to, in everything, we do stop that from happening.

And that's the conversation that I've had with the Commissioner today and we will continue to have as we deal with the protests in the coming days. We have to do better than that. Each one of those incidents corrodes the trust between police and community. We can't let that happen. We've come too far. We are not going to let that happen. So, that's how we will handle it with changes in the approach and with an independent review. But I want to affirm at the same time that again, I'm going to speak as someone who is a veteran of many protests. It is true when there's a peaceful group of protestors and they encounter an overly large police presence, it is unsettling, and it can make things worse. When, however, it is a known fact going into the protest – and I can tell you from meetings we held here at City Hall yesterday with the police leadership, that it was a known fact that there would be some there who aim to do violence.

A large police presence is important to stopping that violence from occurring or from getting out of hand. So, I understand and I respect the public advocate and I would agree with him if what we saw in the course of the evening was peaceful protesters acting peacefully, but I think the Commissioner's laid out very squarely the evidence of why that was not the case. And in that instance, I think there's much more of a reason to have that strength in numbers to actually try to ensure the situation is handled. But what I want to get us to is back to that New York City tradition of peaceful, democratic protest. That is a tradition that works, that changes the world. I'm reminded of the Silent March down Fifth Avenue, beginning of this decade, where we saw thousands upon thousands of New Yorkers saying that stop-and-risk was wrong. It was a silent, peaceful march. It had more impact than you could possibly imagine any act of violence ever achieving because it led to the absolute change of that unconstitutional and broken policy. Peaceful protest did that. Peaceful protest has always been the way in a democracy. So, we're going to always work to do better, but we also have to know when we're dealing with people

who aim to be peaceful versus people who do not aim to be peaceful. Do you want to speak to that –

Commissioner Shea: Just real briefly, Katie, there was two protests planned that turned out to be more yesterday, but two planned. One took place and stepped off from Foley Square in Manhattan. The second that we were aware of was going to be a little later in the day at Barclay Center. You can compare and contrast those two. The first was overwhelmingly peaceful. Officers were assigned to that area. Some of the protestors at that first event actually recognized that there were some people in their midst that were wishing to turn the protest violent and broke up that protest on their own. At the second protest that was taking place, we were aware there was going to be a protest at the Barclay Center. We had a number of plans put in place to address contingencies that may take place throughout the evening.

Thankfully, we had many of those in place and avoided significant damage to stores or property or anything of that nature. But I think it's important to look at the advertisements for that protest. The advertisements specifically spelled out what their intent was, and I won't say it because of the profanities, but this was a well-planned orchestrated protest that was put out specifically to cause destruction and mayhem. And that's what the billing for that second protest was. Armed with that, knowing that in advance, we have to plan accordingly to prevent the stores, the people that live and work in that area and to keep peace. The overwhelming theme here is, thank God, there was no loss of life on any part and that is through again – there was intent to cause loss of life. Thankfully that did not happen. We also did not have stores [inaudible] looting, which we've seen in some other cities. So, that's some of the larger scale picture of it.

Moderator: Jeff from the New York Times is up next – Jeff.

Question: Hey, good morning, Commissioner and Mayor. Just two questions. One, I'm wondering if the Commissioner can speak to some of those incidents of police, you know, seemingly pushing protesters who weren't necessarily or didn't appear to be doing anything. The Mayor has addressed that, called it unacceptable. I'm wondering if the Commissioner can address some of those videos he's seen. And then secondly, I'm wondering, Mr. Mayor, can you just give us a breakdown of what you were doing last night? When did you go to Brooklyn? What did you do once you got to Brooklyn?

Mayor: Yeah, thank you, Jeff. We had meetings in the afternoon right before the protests began. Police leadership over here with me and members of my team. As the afternoon progressed and went into the evening, I was getting constant updates from Commissioner Shea, Chief Monahan, members of my team who were present, senior members of my team were present at different protests. I can get you the exact time, a certain point in the evening I decided it was important to go out and join Commissioner Shea and speak to him directly and his team about what they were seeing, experiencing, and see for myself some of what was going on. And on top of that talked to some members of my team who were present on the scene as well. So to me, we saw a situation that again, if it had been peaceful protest, unquestionably there would have been absolutely the ability to handle this well and respectfully, but that reality of some people aiming to do violence and trying to spread the protest over a bigger area of Brooklyn, that became increasingly clear.

And it was very important to make sure that was addressed while also doing all we could to protect the peaceful protesters. Commissioner to the first piece.

Commissioner Shea: Yeah, thanks for the question. So, when you look at the totality of what we saw last night, I'm aware of two videos that I saw that are disturbing when you look at it to see the actions of the officers. I've been in touch with Joe Resnick from our Internal Affairs Bureau. Quite frankly, I'm not at all concerned about an outside look. We know we have ultimate confidence in our internal look and we're already taking a look at the actions of officers involved in the incident last night. As part of any large-scale demonstration, our operations unit, myself, Terry Monahan and others will conduct a complete after action of all the events of last night, not just with the actions of officers. We hold them to an incredibly high standard and incredibly difficult circumstances. But if there is wrongdoing, then it's our job to call it out, whether it's through training discipline or anything else. But we also look at what can we do better over years, and I'm not – identifying that there were mistakes made last night, quite frankly. Sometimes in these situations you always try to look at them, learn how can we better prepare next time? But that's our job to do that. So, there'll be a complete after action, part of that after action will include the actions of certain officers and we'll go wherever the facts lay.

Moderator: Matt from Newsday is up next. Matt.

Question: Gentlemen, good morning. I have two questions. First there've been protests for much smaller ones shut down including one by a gay rights group, others by folks on the right, political right. Are protests for other causes now allowed in New York City? And secondly, to what extent do you expect a rise in coronavirus cases from these mass gatherings?

Mayor: Yeah. Matt, that's a very important questions and I thank you. I've been really clear. I would wish in this moment, understanding all the pain and the agony that I talked about in the beginning, I would wish that people would choose this as a time to express all of that agony, that need for change, that anger, that frustration in a different way than in-person protests because we're still in the middle of a pandemic. But I understand why after not just years, not just decades, but centuries of oppression, that people at a certain point need to express themselves in the most powerful, present way. Again, always, always peacefully. So, I understand it. But I would still wish that everyone realized that when people gather, it's inherently dangerous in the context of this pandemic. And I'm going to keep urging people not to use that approach. And if they do to focus on social distancing and wearing face coverings.

At the same time, Matt, I understand what's happening around us, both the extent of this crisis and what it means to people, how deeply they're feeling – what a horrible week this was and why it drew out such passion because you cannot see overt racism, you cannot see overt racist murder and not feel something profoundly deep. So I understand that. But the last thing we would want to see is members of our community harmed because the virus spread in one of these settings. So it's a very, very complicated reality. On top of that, you know, as it's getting warmer, as we are now on the way to the first phase of reopening, people are trying to figure out how to adjust to that reality. It's very complicated and Matt, you and many other journalists often want very clean, clear lines, and very sharp definitions, and I think the human reality here doesn't allow for

that. But what we do know is if people do choose to come out, it's our job to keep them safe and protect their right to protest.

Moderator: Last two, David from Gothamist. David.

Question: Thank you, Mr. Mayor. It seems a de-escalation was a tactic not shared by some police officers. How should those officers be held accountable for their actions? Particularly in one instance where one officer was spotted shoving woman to the ground and sending her flying to the pavement. And I'm also wondering, in light of the videos showing these aggressive police tactics, what specific steps can you commit to right now to improve police accountability and transparency?

Mayor: Well, David, we are working on that every day and obviously that accountability is needed. And I think the tragedy, the murder of George Floyd makes abundantly clear that consequences are necessary when a police officer does something wrong. And I am the first to say the vast majority of police officers do the right thing. And a lot of police officers showed amazing restraint last night, and I remember that too. But if any officer in any way does violence to a civilian unprovoked or a civilian who did not violate a law, it has to be a matter of accountability. There has to be visible accountability and that's something we have to do better in New York City from this point on. Our police department has to show that there will be accountability, there will be consequences. They will be visible. They will be swift. I know the Commissioner is going to do his internal review. We're going to do an independent review as well. And again, I saw a few videos that I found deeply disturbing and unacceptable. I want to know anything like that that happened so we can act on it while at the same time remembering the bigger picture, all the officers who showed restraint, all the officers who did protect people appropriately and what they were up against.

Moderator: Last call Dave from ABC-7. Dave.

Question: Hey Mayor, I wanted to ask [inaudible] can you hear me okay Mayor?

Mayor: Yes, indeed.

Question: [Inaudible].

Mayor: Dave, we're losing your voice. I heard you for a moment, but get closer to the microphone.

Moderator: Hey Dave, we missed the first part of your question. Could you please repeat it?

Mayor: Dave, Dave, start over again please? We're having trouble hearing you.

Moderator: Dave?

Question: We're just wondering if the White House is aggravating [inaudible], I'm sorry can you hear me?

Mayor: Try one more time, Dave?

Moderator: Alright, we will get to Dave next time.

Unknown: [Inaudible].

Mayor: Oh wait, I think getting a translation. What was it?

Unknown: From what I can tell is essentially [inaudible] the White House is appropriately responding or basically [inaudible] White House response to all of this.

Mayor: Look, again, I have not, I'll always, Dave, tell you what I know and what I don't know. I've not seen the specific words coming out of the White House or actions, but I can tell you this, and this is the blunt truth, the President of United States helped to create this atmosphere, and that's the tragedy here. It doesn't matter what your party affiliation is, doesn't matter what you think of President Trump, there's been an uptick in tension and hatred and division since he came along. It's just a fact. And it's not the reason for any specific act, but it has helped to poison the atmosphere. So we got to get back to leaders talking about unity. Commissioner Shea and I don't agree on everything. We're human beings, we agree on a lot of things, but we always talk about unity. We always talk about respect for peaceful protest, respect for communities, respect for different points of view, looking for how we can work together, and obviously that's not been the tone set from the top in Washington, and that's one of the reasons we're in this mess we're in. But I'm not going to be discouraged by it. We have to, in this city and cities all over America, we have to heal ourselves. We're not going to look to Washington D.C. We're going to overcome Washington, D.C. and find a way to heal ourselves and move forward, but it has to come from justice. At this point, people are so angry, so frustrated that only seeing real justice, real progress will satisfy that, which means we all have to do better, and that's what we're committed to do. Thank you.

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