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Bethel AME Church

## Restoring Trust Within Our Communities

Bethel AME Church

New York, New York

March 20, 2000

Thank you so very much. I am delighted to be here. I just cannot thank you enough for such a warm welcome. This is the second time I have been in this church. Reverend Mackey, it won't be the last.

I want to thank Reverend Mackey, Reverend (inaudible), Congressman Rangel, my friend Virginia Fields for that enthusiastic introduction, Councilman Bill Perkins, Council member Dickins, all the district leaders and state committee members who are here, the City Council members who are here, all of the elected officials, all of whom have gathered here this evening. I also want to thank the choir.

It is such an honor for me to be here. And I want to talk this evening about all the issues that are on our minds. And the issues that really affect the quality of our lives and are critical to our future together.

And I want to begin by saying a few words about a topic that is troubling me and troubling all of you tonight. The tragic shooting of another young man. Of course there is grief and anger at this loss. And my heart goes out to his family - particularly to his mother who lost her son, and to his daughters who have lost their father, and to all who cared for and about him.

Now as I said a few Sundays ago, at another church, at Riverside. I reject - with all my heart - the notion that falling crime rates demand the rising mistrust between communities and the police. I reject the false choice between effective policing and mutual respect. It is a false choice to say that we cannot cut crime and have better relations between the community and the police. I do not believe that bad relations with the police is a necessary cost of doing the business of keeping our cities safe.

You know you can look across this great nation and see city after city that has found the way to bring down crime rates and racial tensions. Because they focus on helping the police to bring strong, working relationships with the people they serve.

But instead of learning from these examples, the Mayor has hunkered down, taken sides and further divided this city.

What we need now is leadership that brings this city and state together. Leadership that realizes that the growing mistrust makes it harder for the police to do their job in keeping all of us safe.

You know, last week the Mayor and I both said that New Yorkers should wait and reserve judgment on this latest case until all the facts come out. I am still waiting for a full and fair investigation. Unfortunately the Mayor has not - and that is just wrong.

At just the moment when a real leader would have reached out and tried to heal the wounds, he has chosen divisiveness. At just the moment when a real leader would wait for the results of a full and fair investigation, he has led the rush to judgment. That is not leadership.

Everyone, everyone, whether he is a police officer or a civilian, is entitled to equal protection under the law and a fair investigation before any judgment is rendered. That should be the rule and all of us should abide by it. It is wrong to attack either the character of Patrick Dorismond or the police officer. And though it may be hard, none of us should rush to judgment. We should instead be looking for ways to make sure this never, ever happens again.

There are police officers in this city tonight who know that they are feared by the people they risk their lives to protect, and who want badly to restore trust with the communities they serve. I know because they have come up and talked to me. I know because their directors have talked to me. There are many rank-and-file police officers who feel like they are caught in the middle. They want to work with the community. But they are caught in the Mayor's battle with that community.

A member of the clergy said to me, "You know I look out at my congregation and I see young men, some of whom are police officers, and some of whom are on the streets, and I know that both, both of those groups of young men want there to be an understanding of what we must do to heal this community and to bridge the chasm of mistrust that has been allowed to develop.

New York has a real problem, and we all know it. All of us it seems except for the Mayor. For the sake of our communities, for the sake of the police officers, for the sake of our children, for the sake of all New Yorkers, the Mayor must stop dividing this city.

Now while we don't know all the facts about this case, there are some facts we do know: we know that three million New Yorkers don't have health insurance. We know that 9 out of ten schools in New York report that they are in need of repair. We know that for every 16 African American men who are stopped and frisked only 1 is arrested.

You know we have to keep our eyes on the prize of a better, safer future for all of our children. I believe one of the best anti-crime and anti-poverty programs is a world class public education. We should be spending our energy on working together to make sure that every child has the opportunity to learn and to reach his or her greatest God-given potential.

So let us resolve to work toward the day when all of children have the chance to attend schools with modern buildings, good teachers, small classrooms and safe playgrounds. Outside of parenting, there is perhaps no more important job than teaching. And if we want quality teaching, then we should reward quality teaching.

I have been to schools here in New York, where plaster is falling down and whole sections of schools are closed off because it would be too dangerous for anyone to teach or for students to try to learn. I have been in schools built for a thousand where two thousand students are attending classes and more are expected to come next year.

I have taught with teachers who have taught in hallways and broom closets who have used textbooks, as one said to me, a young teacher, older than she was. (Inaudible) It is not acceptable that we are sending our children to schools that

are crumbling around them. So we need to work together to pass legislation in the Congress that would make it possible for us to have school construction bonds that would help us build, repair, and construct the schools that we need.

That is why I will work with Chairman Rangel to provide billions in federal funding to repair and modernize the schools here in this city and throughout New York State because our children deserve nothing less than the best.

You know, Rudy Giuliani cut \$6.7 billion from New York City's capital budget for funding that is used to repair crumbling schools and build new schools. If he did that as Mayor, imagine what he would do as Senator. If he won't address the problems of schools as Mayor, it seems painfully obvious he isn't going to care as a Senator.

And so, if we want every child to learn, then every adult must share the same goal: to raise up our public schools - not tear them down or point fingers at the teachers who labor so hard to reach and teach our children.

I for one have been grateful all of my entire life for my public school education. And I've worked for more than 30 years to make sure that all young people have the same chances that I was given. And we are living now at a time when education is even more important than it was when I was growing up.

There is a fault line between those who will move ahead and those who will be left behind. And we cannot afford to leave anyone behind. With your help, together we can achieve that objective of giving every child the same opportunities, regardless of where they live, or how he or she looks.

One of the reasons, I'm running is because I want to be a leader for all New Yorkers, not just some New Yorkers. I want to engage in the politics of reconciliation, not revenge and retribution. I want to be known by who I lift up, not who I push down.

I will work with you not only during this campaign but when I am in the Senate. I will have an open door and a listening ear. I do not believe I have all the answers, I don't believe any human being has all of the answers.

I believe that we are all called to love one another. I believe

that that is our obligation. And that if you are given the privilege of public office and leadership then you are called to represent what that means in the best sense of the word. The golden rule is not just there for some people, it is there calling each of us to reach out and lift up.

I will work with you and if you put me to work for you I will work my heart out to make sure that every boy and every girl, every child (inaudible) the sound of my voice and far beyond will know that he or she has the same chance if he's willing to work hard, if he's willing to put in the time at any other (inaudible) anywhere in this city, state or country. That is my promise. Thank you so much. <