Mayor Bloombergâ€™s 2006 Inaugural Address

by Gotham Gazette Staff
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“Happy New Year. *Feliz aĂ±o nuevo*.

“Governor Pataki, Mayors Koch, Dinkins and Giuliani, Comptroller Thompson, Public Advocate Gotbaum, thank you for being here.

“And thanks to all of New York’s distinguished public servants. Today I want to especially salute those who are leaving office: Borough President C. Virginia Fields, Council Speaker Gifford Miller, Councilwomen Tracy Boyland, Margarita Lopez, Eva Moskowitz, and Madeline Provenzano, and Councilmen Allan Jennings, Bill Perkins, and Philip Reed.

“And I want to say to the public servants taking their places how much I look forward to working with all of you.

“And, finally, I want to thank everyone here.

“*Gracias a todos*, from every borough and every community, for coming together on this wonderful day â€“ a day full of great promise for our great City.

“Over the past four years, I’ve met and talked with New Yorkers who practice every religion, speak every language, and come from everywhere on Earth. It’s been the experience of a lifetime, not only because of the generous warmth â€“ and advice â€“ you’ve given me, but also because you’ve shared with me your deepest hopes and dreams.

“It’s the enormous power of those dreams, over eight million of them, that gives our city its unique optimism, what one author described as: â€ that sense â€“ so peculiar to New York â€“ that something extraordinary would happen any minute, any day, any month.’

“Possibility, Opportunity: This is the essence of New York. This is the air we breathe. This is the

promise of tomorrow.

“But let us not forget, on Inauguration Day four years ago, that optimism seemed in jeopardy.

“The terrible devastation we had suffered only months before remained uppermost in our minds. From this very spot, we saw plumes of smoke still rising into the January chill from the World Trade Center site. We were a city in mourning, shaken and wounded.

“Accepting the enormous responsibility entrusted in me, I asked New Yorkers that day to keep faith in our common destiny, to think big, dream big, and prepare to build an even greater city.

“And because we did, today we are stronger than ever.

“True, the wounds we have suffered may never fully heal, but something else has endured. Something even more compelling; something even more powerful: our unity.

“On 9/11, New Yorkers came together. And since 9/11, we have stayed together.

“We’ve been united through blizzards and a blackout, and, most recently, we’ve overcome a transit strike that could well have shut down our city. We have accepted the risks and requirements of the post-9/11 world without abandoning our devotion to our liberties, our zest for life, or our feisty charm.

“United in the face of terrorism, New Yorkers have embraced the timeless wisdom that the secret of happiness is freedom, and the secret of freedom is courage.

“Over the past four years, we’ve learned â€“ or re-learned â€“ that in this, the most diverse of cities, we are one people, with one common destiny. That same spirit of unity must continue to guide us now.

“We have gone through the tough times, and come out stronger.

“Our population is at an all-time high. Crime is going down; student achievement is going up; jobs are being created; new homes and parks are strengthening and revitalizing our neighborhoods.

“We’ve come a long way, and now we have a choice to make.

“We could be content with what we have accomplished, and preserve our gains, or we can take our beloved city even further forward â€“ and make the promise of opportunity real for every person in every community.

“No one need ask which one we’ll choose.

“We are New Yorkers!

“We never stop reaching, striving, and working. We know there is more we can do, and more we must do. We know there can be no turning back. And there will be no holding back.

“United, we will take on new challenges â€“ with the passion and dedication that New York demands of us. United, we will succeed.

“Think about what we have accomplished in the last four years.

“Against all odds, we’ve made the safest big city in the nation even safer, for motorists and pedestrians on our streets, from fires in our homes â€“ at the tragic cost of six of our Bravests’ lives â€“ and dramatically safer from crime in each of our five boroughs.

“Now, staying united will make us even safer.

“Our most urgent challenge is ending the threat of guns and the violence they do. Twice in recent weeks, police officers have been struck down by gunfire on our streets. Twice the flags flying on this plaza have been lowered to half-staff, and the sound of pipes and drums has escorted brave and decent young men on their final journeys.

“Detectives Dillon Stewart and Daniel Enchautegui were among twelve of New York City’s Finest who gave their lives in the line of duty during the last four years.

“Now we have a duty as well, one that rises above all partisan politics, and one we will pursue relentlessly: And that is to rid our streets of guns, and punish all those who possess and traffic in these instruments of death.

“This is a national threat â€“ one that crosses city lines and state boundaries.

“To meet it, we must, and we will, make common cause with our fellow Americans.

“We will take our message to Albany, to Washington, and to every capital of every state that permits guns to flow freely across its borders.

“And to those who distort our laws to aid and abet hardened criminals, know this: We will not rest until we secure all of the tools we need to protect New Yorkers from the scourge of illegal guns.

“Public safety is the foundation of our city’s prosperity.

“Without it, our quality of life, our economy, our efforts to reform the schools would surely falter.

“Ensuring our safety has paved the way to taking on the other challenges we’ve faced.

“Working together, we’ve overcome the worst fiscal crisis in a generation. It threatened our quality of life and jeopardized our future. Courageously, together we made a fundamental choice to face up to the crisis, and master it â€“ and not postpone and evade, thereby repeating the mistakes of the 1970s.

“And because that was the right choice, we’ve done more with less, and today our quality of life is better and New Yorkers are living longer.

“Staying united, we will be fiscally responsible.

“This is not the time to relax our vigilance, or to make the wrong choice of shifting our financial burdens onto the shoulders of our children.

“City government can and must live within its means. And we will do so without abandoning the compassion that defines our city. We will care for the elderly, the homeless, and all those in need.

“City government must also be the catalyst of opportunity in all five boroughs.

“Private enterprise, not make-work public programs, always will account for New York's prosperity.

“The public sector’s role is to create the conditions that foster private investment. That is why, from West Harlem to Jamaica, and from Hunts Point to Coney Island, we are replacing long

twilights of blight and abandonment with the bright dawn of new parks, new homes, and new hope.

“Staying united, we will transform the face of our city.

“We will protect and improve our open spaces. We’ll revitalize our incomparable waterfront. We’ll begin to turn what was once the world’s biggest landfill into the City’s largest new park in more than 100 years.

“We’ll pursue the most ambitious affordable housing initiative in New York’s history. We’ll encourage development where it’s needed, and curb it where it’s not.

“And we’ll quicken the pace of rebuilding here in Lower Manhattan, creating a sustainable residential and commercial community.

“By giving New York a genuine 21st century downtown, we’ll ensure that this â€“ our historic birthplace â€“ once again captures the imagination and admiration of people around the globe.

“Four years ago, our City was caught in a deep national recession, and our economy was hemorrhaging jobs. Because we’ve stimulated growth in all five boroughs, today, by contrast, our economy is once again moving forward.

“But for too many in our city, opportunity is still elusive.

“And so long as that is true, this will not be the New York that we want it to be.

“Staying united, we will create more jobs for all New Yorkers.

“Over the next four years, we will aggressively foster small business start-ups and expansion, and promote our growth industries â€“ from tourism, to the arts, to the life sciences.

“And because the best anti-poverty program ever devised is a job, we’ll also step up our efforts to move thousands more New Yorkers from the dependency of welfare to the dignity of work.

“Over the past four years, we’ve also started to fulfill our most important obligation: to our children.

“To give them the future they deserve, we’ve established accountability and set standards in our public schools.

“We’ve brought a sense of excitement and possibility to teachers, to parents, and to children. We’ve given the schools an arts curriculum that is worthy of the nation’s cultural capital. We’ve begun to ensure all our students the first-rate education that is their fundamental civil right.

“That is the hinge on which the future of our city will turn.

“Staying united â€“ for our children’s sake â€“ we can and we will lead our schools forward.

“We will lock in, and extend, all our hard-won reforms.

“We will not permit anyone to turn back the clock!

“Our mission over the next four years will be: To create â€“ from pre-school through high school â€“ a public education system second to none.

“We will strengthen the three pillars of our school reform: Leadership, Accountability, and Empowerment, putting resources and authority where they belong: in the schools of our city.

“And because the eyes of the nation are on our efforts, our successes hold the promise of hope for schools across the land.

“What a wonderful gift for New York to share with the rest of our country.

“We in this City can accomplish all these goals and more, but only if we continue to stay above narrow partisan politics.

“Over the past four years, New Yorkers have shown that we can solve any problem when we set our self-interest aside, and put our common interests first. Government must embody that spirit.

“We must make our political process more open and accountable, the operations of government agencies more transparent, and our methods of appointing and electing our judges above reproach.

“On Inauguration Day in 2002, I pledged to govern our city without partisanship or prejudice.

“I meant it then â€“ and I’m renewing that commitment today.

“The door to this great building will remain open to all New Yorkers, wherever they’re from, whatever they believe, whomever they love.

“Over the past four years, we’ve given New Yorkers a City government of independence and integrity.

“That will continue. We will not compromise our principles. We will not sidestep the hard choices. And we will always do what we believe is right for the people of New York.

“Forty years ago, New York â€“ as it’s done for countless others â€“ opened its arms and took me in.

“And during the past four years, I’ve had the chance to fall in love with this City all over again. I’ve learned even more what connects all of us to New York so deeply, what draws us here from every corner of the globe, and what keeps us here â€“ generation after generation.

“It’s possibility. It’s opportunity. It’s ambitions as bold as seeing your name in lights on Broadway, and as simple and universal as creating a good home and a better life for your children.

“That’s what New York City is all about.

“Our job, yours and mine, is to give every single New Yorker the chance to realize those ambitions and pursue those dreams.

“Four years ago, I spoke of building a better New York. And I can tell you exactly who is building it.

“It’s the couple who has just made the down payment on their first home in Cypress Hills. It’s the second-grader with a newfound love of reading, checking a book out of the Harlem Branch Library. It’s the returning veteran in Sunset Park who’s ready to exchange a helmet for a hard hat, and the shopkeepers on Fordham Road whose hard work and long hours are a labor of love for their families.

“You are the people who truly make this the place where â€ something extraordinary happens, any minute, any day, any month.’

“You are making this a better City for all of us. You are the promise of New York, and we believe in your dreams.

“The challenges we confront are not easy, nor will they be the last ones New Yorkers ever face.

“After all, it was O. Henry who once wrote that, â€ New York will be a great place â€“ if they ever finish it.’

“But over the next four years, we will neither turn back, nor hold back.

“Staying united, we will renew the promise of our city â€“ and commit ourselves to finishing our unfinished work, making Our City even greater and a true City of Opportunity for all of us here today, and for our children and our children’s children.

“Thank you, and may God bless New York City.”

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