

**MAYOR MICHAEL A. NUTTER'S REMARKS TO BETHEL TEMPLE
COMMUNITY BIBLE CHURCH – Monday 16 January, 2012**

Below is a transcript of Mayor Nutter's remarks

Good afternoon.

Rev Estrada thank you very much for opening the doors of the Bethel Community Church.

To all of the folks who are assembled here with us this evening.

I've been in, in one way, shape or form, I've been in public life probably now close to 30 years. Not all elected. But I've been around.

Been an elected official nearly 20. I've seen a few things in my time.

Many of you know my story of course. I'm a son of Philadelphia. Born, raised, educated, created a little bit of trouble in this town. I grew up in West Philadelphia. I'm from here. This is my city.

I'm fortunate to be the 98th Mayor of my hometown.

It is personally painful what we go through day to day.

Personal.

I'm a father of two. I've a sixteen year old daughter, a junior in high school. And a twenty-eight year old son. So I know a little bit about parenting. I try to be the best father that I can be.

I've had to talk to parents who've lost children. I've talked to children who've lost parents. Grandmothers and grandfathers, brothers and sisters, and nieces and nephews.

It's a city of children.

It's a day of love, peace, celebrating the life and the legacy and the work of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., himself a man of great peace, cut down in the prime of his life by violence.

When will enough be enough.

Dante's grandmother is here with us. God bless you ma'am.

I cannot say I know how you feel. I wouldn't insult you that way. But I have a little bit of a sense of it.

I saw the faces of children last Wednesday. Went to two schools. Kensington Culinary. Bracetti School.

I saw young people crying, knowing that someone that they had just gone to school with, was now dead. Dante. Javier. Joshua. Aaron, shot in the neck.

No reason. No excuse. No explaining it. You can't explain it.

Over the weekend, Saturday afternoon I was at a memorial service for the son of one of our public employees, Lance Haver. He and his wife Lisa, their son Darren, four years ago a senseless shooting that paralyzed him from the shoulders down. Basically in bed, or on a gurney for four years. He passed away last month.

They had a memorial service for him on Saturday afternoon. And we listened for probably an hour and forty-five minutes to all kinds of stories about his life and about things he did. And some were funny and some were crazy and some were somewhere in between.

You think about those parents who will never have more of those moments with their child. Shot for no reason.

And then Friday into Saturday, and we all know now into Sunday's newspaper, Kevin Klessy, a twenty-three year old Temple student, excited to be in Philadelphia, excited about his job, apparently a really funny guy, a lot of friends.

About four hours ago I talked to his mother, because that's what I do as Mayor. I talk to grieving parents and children and family members.

And I said to her, I can't, there's really nothing I can say to you, there's nothing to say. Oh I'm sorry, we're in pain, we're suffering but yours is worse. We'll do our best – Deputy Commissioner Wright, Police Commissioner Ramsey, Captain Vanore – we'll do our best to find these people who did this because there's no explaining what they did.

All of this, all of this. It would be like if I took my coat off and you sliced and stabbed and poked holes in this fabric. At some point in time the seams won't hold it together, the fabric won't hold together any more.

That's what's happening in this city. The fabric of our human nature is being ripped apart, piece by piece by piece, thread by thread. Pulled apart.

And what happens? At some point you don't have a fabric anymore. You don't have a jacket anymore. You don't have a quilt of humanity in this city anymore, if we continue to let these kinds of things to happen.

Now, the Police Department has a role. I get that. And yes we're hiring more officers and yes there'll be more officers on the street.

But how many more officers would we have had to had 10:30 last Tuesday night to stop that. How would we know that someone would wait in an alley for seven teenagers in a car, and then shoot it up as if it was a video game or a movie. How would we do that? How would we know that someone would do something like that in this city? What program would we have in place, what is the mindset of people who do things like that?

Well I don't know. Because that's just evil. And I don't know what else to do with evil, but to try and snatch it out of here. And we have to stand as a city and finally say, enough is enough. I can't take this anymore. I refuse to accept this anymore.

We caught the guy, as I knew we would. And then he gave the gun to somebody else, who we now can't find. We know his name and I bet somebody else does too. And I bet somebody knows not only who he is, but where he is. When are we going to start speaking out and end our silence? Because every day that that person is running around, or the other person is running around, or somebody else is running around and hurting somebody else that we don't even know, that's another day that everyone of us in this room and a million other people in this city are still in danger.

We have to create an environment where people don't do the things that they do anymore. That someone won't pick up that illegal gun. We have to have an environment and a mindset that says none of our children should be without their parents and none of our parents should be without their children, and grandparents, and aunts and uncles. The pain and the suffering.

Every time one of these situations happens the first thing I think about is suppose that was one of my children. Suppose someone tried to snatch my daughter away from me or take my son away from me. I know how I would feel. I think. I'm not exactly sure.

That's what this is really about. Stop it. Stop it. Stop it. You're ripping out the heart and soul and the guts and the brains and everything else that makes us human out of this city. That's what's really going on. And we have to stand up to it and we cannot be afraid of it any longer.

If you see something, say something. If you know something, tell it.

The robbing, the shooting, the stealing, the beating up, the theft.

It may not have happened to you but it happened to somebody. And we're here at Bethel. And if we can't be each others brothers and sisters keepers here, then they can't be anywhere. It is painful, it hurts, whether you know the person or not, that this kind of death and destruction takes place in THIS city.

And I refuse to believe that Philadelphians are so much different, are so much more murderous, are so much more violent, are so much more vicious than people in New York or Boston or Los Angeles or San Francisco or Atlanta or Chicago or San Diego or anywhere else.

We're Philadelphians. Unfortunately we've gotten off to a really bad start. We're only halfway through the month. And if we can't be non-violent on THIS day. A man who suffered, died, so that all of us could be free. So that each and every one of us could have the positions that we have today.

If we can't be non-violent then I don't know what day we're waiting for. And if we can be non-violent today then let us be non-violent tomorrow. What about Wednesday? Carry it on to Thursday. How about Friday and Saturday? And maybe even Sunday. And then we can start over next Monday.

We can be non-violent as much as we want to be non-violent because that decision is within each and every one of us at any moment. And so when that person looks at you and you don't like the way they looked, how about if you turn away. Maybe somebody did talk to your girl or your guy. Maybe you let that one slide.

I'm begging our parents please pay more and more attention to what's going on with our children. Not your children. With our children. Facebook and Twitter. Texting and all this other kind of stuff. More than likely you're probably paying the bill. Well at least, when I grew up, not that we had any of that stuff, that gave my mother the right to check my stuff. Because as long as I was living in that house, I didn't own anything. I just happened to be living there. Just happened to be living there. As long as I was under that roof.

Our children may be growing up, but they're not grown. And you're still in charge. That's what parenting is all about. It's not like it was on Leave it to Beaver. That was on TV. This is hard, cold stuff here. The world has changed since I was a kid. I get that. It's more complicated, more vicious, more controversial, more stuff that our children are exposed to each and every day. Somehow we've become almost de-sensitized to the things that go on. 'Oh so-and-so got hurt yesterday. Oh so-and-so got shot. Ok, what's happening with the Sixers?'

We cannot lose our humanness. Because if we lose our humanness we are in fact less humane, we are in fact less civil, we will care less about what happens next until it happens to us. That's what the interconnectedness is all about. That's what the beloved society is all about. That's what Dr King was talking about. The worst of tragedies has brought us here together today. Let it not be for nothing. Let it not have no meaning. I know that was not great English! Let's make sure it has meaning. Let's make sure that whatever comes out of this, that there's a renewed sense of spirit and oneness. That this really is one city. That this is one community. That this is one Philadelphia and that we can fight back.

The year is young. We have a whole lot more days to go before the story is written. So don't let anybody start talking about 'Oh my goodness, it started off so bad and this is the way it's going to be the rest of the year'. That's not possible. It's not possible.

And the rest of this year, because for all of us tomorrow is the first day of the rest of our collective lives. We get to decide what tomorrow is about. We get to decide how bright it is. We get to decide whether these young people really do have a future, all these children who are in this house tonight.

And there'll be some more information after this. And it is about a rising city. It is about a city that's coming back. It is about a city that's willing to fight for itself and it's own future. House by house. Block by block. Neighborhood by neighborhood. Community by community.

That's what this is about. That's what wakes me up in the morning. That's what I think about right before I go to sleep at night. I'm going to keep fighting. Every day. But I can't do it by myself. And the people up here can't do it by themselves. It requires all of us to work together in a spirit of peace and harmony. All these other battles that go on, all of these other inter-personal things that go on, this can't be about personalities. This has to be about people and it has to be about the children of this city. They listen to us and they watch us. And they listen to what we say and they watch what we do and they're smart enough to know the distance between them. They are human sponges. And you wonder, why they may something a year from now. Where did that come from? Well more than likely they heard it at home, heard it on the TV, they heard it at school or they heard it in the street, but they got it from somewhere. And now it's coming right back at you, and you don't know why.

Let us treat them with peace. Let us not abuse our children. Let us not beat them up. Let us find a new way of communicating with them. That violence is not the way you solve each and every problem. We wonder why sometimes they're doing the things they're doing in the street? Let us be honest with each other. Because they see some of the same things at home.

When that situation happened, when our young people were killed the other night, when I got home Wednesday night I right down in that basement, my daughter was studying, went right over to her and gave her a big hug. And of course being a sixteen year old she was 'Daddy, what is wrong with you? What is that all about?' I needed that. I needed that. I needed the reaffirmation of that connection back to her based on what had happened in the course of that day. Because I am still in pain and I'm not ashamed to admit it. I am still in pain, as the leader of this city.

Because before I had this job, and before I had the other job, and before I had the other job, I had the most important job I'm ever gonna have in my life. And that's being a father. That's my job. That's my big job. All the other things are secondary to that job.

And so I want you to join me whether you have a child or not, because you have children out here and we're all responsible for them. These are our children whether you have one or not, whether they're grown 35-40 years old or whether they're three. Whether you're a grandmother and you think you raised all your kids and everything, you think you're going to ride off into the sunset. Not possible.

Let us reconnect with our community. Let us reconnect with our children. Let us reaffirm to them that we love them, that we care about them, that we will protect them each and every day. That from the moment they wake up we will give them love, we will hold them close, even when they upset us. And they have a unique way of really upsetting us from time to time. There's no one who can upset you as much as a child can. It appears to be their job to keep us on edge each and every day. And our job is to love them anyway. And raise them right. And if you want that child to grow up and be a successful adult here in the city of Philadelphia you have to pay a whole lot more time and attention to them.

And the last thing I'm going to say is, TV, and I watch TV and my daughter watches TV, and video games and computers, all very interesting. Can even be instructional. And they ask for stuff all the time – the xbox, they want this, and new jeans, and gotta get the Jordans. You know what they really want? You know what they really want? They want you. They want you. It's just like that credit card commercial says. You get this and you get that and what's that last one? Priceless. It's priceless what you can do with them. All they want is a little bit of time and a little bit of attention. All they want to know is that you love them and care about them and will protect them from all this evilness out there.

Well that's what uniting our neighborhoods is all about. We're recommitted and you're going to hear something about that tonight. I'm not giving up. Yes I'm angry and yes I'm in pain. But as the Reverend said earlier, you have to then take that and channel that and take that raw energy that raw emotion and you funnel it, and it's powerful.

So I'm reenergized and I'm ready to work. And I need all of you to join in this massive effort to turn this city around in peace, love and hope for this great city called Philadelphia.

God bless you.