

## Life In Brief

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**Current Title:** Mayor

### Work History:

- Mayor of New York City, 2014-present
- Public Advocate of New York City, 2010-14
- Member of the New York City Council from the 39th District, 2002-10
- Campaign Manager, Hillary Clinton, 2000
- Regional Director of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 1997-2000
- Campaign Manager, Charles Rangel (D-NY) and Bill Clinton, 1994-96
- Aide, NYC Mayor David Dinkins, 1988-93
- Political Organizer, Quixote Center, 1987-88

### Electoral Overview:

- Won primary for NYC Council's 39th district in 2001 with 32%, easily won the general election and two reelections with more than 71%
- Won a landslide general election and reelection for Mayor in 2013 and 2017 (72% and 65%)

## Quick Summary

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**Activist organizer who spearheaded progressive causes and campaigns before becoming Mayor of New York City**

- Inherited a progressive identity from his parents, who were denounced during McCarthyism
- Distributed aid in Nicaragua while working for a nonprofit during the Sandinista era, which he says reinforced his beliefs in government's duty to protect the poor
- Rose through NYC politics as a skilled campaigner, earning respect from the Clintons

- Vocal leader on NYC City Council and its General Welfare Committee; strongly pushed housing, education, and equality legislation
- Makes incremental progress on longstanding issues through deals but has used executive orders to make fast progress on priority issues (e.g., pledging NYC to Paris agreements)
- Uses his ascendancy to Mayor as a stump to push a progressive agenda about inequality and fairness in speeches and on TV
- Made an unsuccessful bid for President in 2020; later endorsed Bernie Sanders

## Approach and Motivations

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**Former provocateur who evolved into a dealmaker upon entering politics**

- Motivated by his parents to work for justice and transparency through proactive government solutions attuned to the needs of communities
- Developed a proclivity for direct action at an early age; involved in political movements since high school, publicly celebrated the Cuban revolution, and has been arrested multiple times, including protesting US foreign policy
- Adopted a more diplomatic approach upon entering politics; known as a shrewd dealmaker
- Persistent in trying to find common ground with Andrew Cuomo; despite not seeing eye to eye, the politicians typically come back to the table

## Policy Position and Areas of Focus

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**Fierce advocate for welfare policies that promote equality and ease burdens on families**

**Inequality: *Fighting structural inequities with policy reform***

- Raised NYC's minimum wage to \$15 per hour and instituted required paid sick leave
- Created ID card system helping undocumented immigrants to access financial services
- Organized "*The Progressive Agenda to Combat Inequality*," a forum for liberal leaders to craft policy urging tax fairness, worker protections

**Housing: *Promotes policies to make housing more affordable for the underprivileged***

- Pushed legislation on the NYC City Council to prevent discrimination against tenants holding federal subsidy vouchers and to help New Yorkers with HIV/AIDS access housing services
- As Public Advocate, he launched the "NYC's Worst Landlords Watchlist," putting pressure on landlords with mounting violations and helping tenants to organize repairs, access building info
- As Mayor, he proposed and passed Mandatory Inclusionary Housing & Zoning for Quality and Affordability, putting forceful incentives in place for developers to build low-cost housing
- Negotiated a 2019 agreement with HUD to address health and safety hazards at NYCHA properties; policy creates requirements to remediate lead, mold, heating, and other issues

**Education: *Champion of government initiatives that increase access to early education***

- Top Mayoral priority was universal pre-K; in two years, enrollment tripled and his programs serve over half of NYC's homeless children
- Lowered tuition and hired more teachers to address overcrowding of CUNY universities through \$150M annual investment
- Opposes charter schools and prevented some from using space in public school buildings

## **Core Communities**

**Profound connections to liberals in New York and beyond**

**Prominent New York Democrats: *Cognoscente of the New York political scene for more than thirty years***

- Worked in City Hall for David Dinkins – the last Democratic Mayor before de Blasio – before campaigning for former Rep. Charles Rangel
- Friends with actress/politico Cynthia Nixon and Howard Dean, a New Yorker and former Governor of Vermont and chair of the DNC
- Worked with Harold Ickes on Hillary Clinton's 2000 Senate campaign, who credited him with guiding Clinton through NYC politics
- Testy ties to Andrew Cuomo, who has criticized de Blasio's policies and made decisions affecting NYC without consulting him

**New York Working Class: *Active engagement with constituent groups***

- Commended by citizens of the South Bronx for HUD outreach and work there in the late 90's
- Was active in the community until becoming Mayor; elected to Brooklyn School Board and coached Little League
- Endorsed by the Working Families Party and other labor groups in NYC

**Leftwing Activists: *Major ties to groups supporting leftist causes in Central America***

- Focused on Latin American politics in graduate school and helped oversee aid efforts in Nicaragua; supported the Sandinista movement
- Heavily involved with the Nicaragua Solidarity Network as an activist and volunteer fundraiser
- Helped forge an alliance between New York and Nicaraguan labor unions

- Remained sympathetic to leftwing activism throughout the 1990s until becoming further embroiled in NYC politics

- Ted Strickland, 2010, \$100
- Wendy Greuel, 2013, \$100
- Joan Millman, 2000, \$50

## Relevant Financial Information

**Donors reflect New York and proponents of his progressive policy priorities**

### Biggest Industry Donors (Career)

- Lawyers & Lobbyists, \$915,849
- Real Estate, \$744,855
- Labor Unions, \$518,318
- Securities & Investment, \$302,902
- Education, \$112,609

### Biggest Corporate Donors (Career)

- Mason Tenders District Council, \$22,340
- Local 338, \$18,150
- UAW Region 9A, \$14,850
- UAW International Union, \$9,900
- Greenberg Traurig LLP, \$9,900

### Biggest Individual Donors (Career)

- Gina Argento, CEO of Broadway Stages, \$16,800
- Richard Schiffrin, Of Counsel at Grant & Eisenhofer, \$14,850
- Despina Konstantinides, Independent Artist, \$14,800
- John Zuccotti, Real estate developer and civic leader, \$13,375
- Henry Gutman, Of Counsel at Simpson Thatcher & Bartlett \$13,375

### Political Donations

- Barack Obama, 2012, \$500
- Daniel Roberti, 2012, \$250

## Publications, Media and Speaking

**Most media appearances regard his 2020 election bid; shows firm belief in values through op-ed and speeches**

**Publications: *Frequently pens op-eds in national and major New York outlets***

- Preferred Outlets: The NYT, Huffington Post, NY Mag, NBC, Wired Magazine
- Favorite Subjects: NYC-related issues like the Amazon HQ and Hurricane Sandy, taxes, climate change, 2020 Presidential election, progressivism, automation

**Media: *Interviewed frequently about the 2020 election and speaks about progressive causes; does not grant very many interviews***

- Preferred Outlets: National cable news like MSNBC, NBC, Fox News, PBS, CNN; talks shows like The View and Late Night with Seth Myers; local New York papers like NY Daily News and NY Mag; interviewed for magazines like The Atlantic and Vanity Fair
- Favorite Subjects: education, 9/11, charter schools, unions, inequality, housing, NYPD, child care
- Social Media Habits: Manages own tweets and posts consistently (around twice a day)

**Speaking: *In addition to mayoral duties, often talks with students and attends rallies for progressive causes***

- Favorite Subjects: inequality, education, safe and affordable living, climate change, police-community relations



- Preferred Audience: New Yorkers generally from the Mayor's Office; union groups like AFL-CIO and the United Federation of Teachers; schools like the Coalition School for Social Change, Columbia University and The New School

## Professional Affiliations

- Past Head of the New York City Council's General Welfare Committee
- School Board for District 15 Brooklyn, 1999

## Family and Personal Background

### Raised with an active interest in liberal politics

- Born Warren Wilhelm Jr. in Manhattan but raised in Cambridge, Massachusetts
- Adopted mother's maiden name, first as a hyphen when he was 22 and then fully in 2001
- Both parents' careers were derailed by McCarthyism: Maria de Blasio worked in the Office of War information when she was accused of Communist sympathies and was denounced by Whittaker Chambers; Warren Wilhelm went to Yale and was a contributing editor to TIME Magazine, received a purple heart after his leg was amputated during WWII
- His father was forced out of a position at the Department of Commerce and turned to alcoholism; the parents split when Bill was 7, and he was raised by his mother/her family; his father committed suicide when Bill was 18
- Received a degree in metropolitan studies from NYU; awarded a Harry S. Truman scholarship to study International Affairs at Columbia
- Inspired by FDR, Fiorello La Guardia, as well as the Nicaraguan Solidarity Movement

### From activism to tactful advocacy

- Met his wife Chirlane McCray, five years his elder, while they were both working in Mayor Dinkins' office
- McCray is a speechwriter, poet, and activist – who wrote a groundbreaking 1979 poem “I Am a Lesbian”; she is well-known to be his closest advisor and helps write and edit his speeches
- Shifted from confrontational activism to more diplomatic politicking
- Currently a proponent of Democratic Socialism, speaking across the country and on national TV, as well as organizing *The Progressive Agenda TO Combat Inequality*

## Criticisms and Controversies

### Scrutinized by constituents for not being visible in the city and handful of highly public incidents

### Chronically late and criticized by New Yorkers for a lack of focus on the city

- Frequently chastised for being late to events, including showing up two hours late to a slain police officer's funeral
- Criticized for running for president instead of focusing on city business
- Lost a lawsuit where he tried to prevent the release of City Hall emails with strategist John Del Cecato (and others) that showed ample time dedicated to campaigning and political posturing

### Killed a groundhog

- Dropped it on the ground during first Groundhog Day Ceremony as Mayor
- Its death from internal injuries a week later resulted in a scandal involving revealing an imposter groundhog

### Blowback over Amazon HQ2 incident

- Accused of “flip-flopping” sentiments after the company pulled out of an agreement to house its second headquarters in New York
- Originally supported and negotiated a deal with Amazon but attacked the company after the deal fell apart, citing it as an example of the abuse of corporate power