

NATIONAL REVIEW

Nicole Malliotakis's Battle Cry Should Be 'Clean Up New York!'

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Four words elected Donald J. Trump president:

“Make America great again.”

Unlike Hillary Clinton's nebulous creed — “Stronger Together” — Trump's slogan was a call to action. MAGA suggested better times ahead and recalled better times behind. Also, MAGA was general enough that voters supplied their own definitions of “great,” ranging from low taxes to school choice or what Trump called a “beautiful southern-border wall.”

Gotham's Republican/Conservative mayoral nominee Nicole Malliotakis should deploy her own four-word motto:

“Clean Up New York!”

That battle cry would crystallize what New Yorkers already know: Democratic mayor Bill de Blasio has made a grimy mess of America's premier metropolis. There is plenty to clean up, all of which the Staten Island state assemblywoman easily could articulate:

Clean up the garbage.

A random walk down any New York street these days confirms that litter, refuse, and overall squalor are widespread. Thoroughfares that were tidy under Mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani and well tended under Mayor Michael Bloomberg now are trashed under Bill de Blasio, the former Warren Wilhelm Jr. Broad avenues and narrow side streets teem with discarded fast-food containers, rubbish tornadoes, and other detritus. Vagrants invade trash bags and pillage bottles and cans, which they sell to recyclers.

This nasty habit and the overall collapse of hygiene have local rats doing cartwheels. Rodents have become more visible and brazen. Rather than skitter about only on quiet streets late at night, rats popped up last month on Park Avenue near 34th Street and at the corner of Broadway and 14th Street — extremely busy intersections — barely at dusk.

While visiting my local shoe-repair shop, which I have frequented for at least a decade, I saw a mouse dart along the baseboard. I alerted the owner. He told me that he opened his door for some breeze, as he often does. For the first time, a rodent scurried inside from the sidewalk.

Under Mayor Michael Bloomberg, there were 10,534 rat sightings in all of 2010, according to [New York City's Open Data website](#). Through December 31, 2013, Bloomberg's last day in City Hall, rat sightings across the five boroughs stood at 10,726, a 1.8 percent increase, or 0.6 percent annually.

Under de Blasio, who took office on January 1, 2014, rat sightings soared from the 10,726 that he inherited from Bloomberg to 17,206 in 2016, a 60.4 percent increase (20.1 percent average, per annum). A fairer measure is to compare the 7,856 rat sightings for September 2, 2013, with the 13,642 on September 2, 2017. This 73.7 percent increase in rat appearances under de Blasio's supervision equals an 18.4 percent annual expansion in that stomach-turning metric. (For more data on this revolting trend, please see my spreadsheet [here](#).)

The Big Query's analysis of calls to the city's 311 quality-of-life hotline saw rodent complaints climb 73 percent between 2010 and 2016. That perfectly matches that period's 73 percent hike in dirty-sidewalk reports. In short, Mayor Rat's flagrant disregard for basic hygiene has proven a bonanza for rodents and a living hell for New Yorkers who are sick of sharing their city with disease-carrying pests that breed like, well, rats.

How can Malliotakis address New York's state of filth? She should promise to make able-bodied welfare recipients work — including recruiting some to sweep sidewalks. Also helpful: Have New Yorkers rate cleanliness block by block, as a key compensation variable for relevant sanitation managers. Also, approving new Business Improvement Districts would mean more BID employees to clean up New York, one commercial neighborhood at a time. Public urination, recently decriminalized, should be recriminalized. Finally, if ripping open trash bags to swipe recyclables is not a crime, it should be — and so enforced.

Clean up the homeless.

Democratic mayoral candidate Sal Albanese calls New York's homelessness problem "a crisis on steroids." According to an official estimate, 3,892 unsheltered homeless people were on Gotham's streets last February, compared with 2,794 in February 2016 — a one-year, 39 percent hike. According to *Politico*, this is the highest level of street vagrancy since 2005, when New York City began to measure this phenomenon.

This disaster is hammering taxpayers. City comptroller Scott Stringer reports that City Hall spent \$73 million to shelter homeless people in 30 Manhattan hotels between November 1, 2015, and last October 31. This included rooms in Times Square for \$629 per night. Taxpayers plowed \$222-per-night into Financial District accommodations. At \$6,600 per month, this was triple the rents for nearby studio apartments.

Malliotakis should fix this catastrophe by mothballing the welcome mat that de Blasio rolled out for America's street dwellers. They now see the Big Apple as their oyster: If you can fail here, you can fail anywhere. As derelict Guy Ritchie, 55, told the *New York Post* in August, "the city is my den, my living room, my bathroom — everything." Rejecting this attitude, and empowering police officers to keep bums moving, would start to turn this wretched tide.

Malliotakis also should promise zero tolerance for shantytowns and now-ubiquitous sidewalk encampments. A very relaxed homeless man on Central Park West this summer connected two metal police barricades and pushed them against one of the park's stone walls. Inside this

triangular “residence,” he added a bench, a radio, and a burning stick of incense. The cops should have dismantled this display of dysfunction and sent the hobo packing.

Malliotakis should propose privatizing the sidewalks of New York. Granting building owners the pavement in front of their structures, in exchange for property-tax payments, would put them in charge. They then could tell bums to beat it.

Malliotakis also should be frank: Few of these people are simply homeless. Lots are al fresco lunatics. A lack of low-income housing does not explain the man who sat on concrete at the corner of Fourth Avenue and East 14th Street in late July, sipping Coors from a can at 8:55 a.m. The disheveled, barefoot man who recently suffered uncontrollable tremors on a West 17th Street stoop was not waiting for rents to drop 10 percent so he could occupy his dream apartment. Many, if not most, “homeless” are seriously alcoholic, severely drug addicted, gravely mentally ill, or all of the above. Rather than yet another affordable-housing project, what thousands of these sometimes-violent people need is serious psychological intervention. It should become easier to institutionalize them. This would be good for them and other New Yorkers. Malliotakis should be candid about this, because this is exactly what Gothamites whisper to one another every day.

Clean up graffiti.

Paint-can-wielding vandals are on a tear. Graffiti that once marred buildings on the city’s periphery now defaces buildings on major street corners, such as the defunct Village Pourhouse bar at Third Avenue and East Eleventh Street. Its abandoned windows are completely blackened with disgusting, indecipherable “tags.” Graffiti criminals who stealthily marred buildings with mere squiggles now comprehensively entomb entire shop fronts in spray paint. They evidently have little fear of consequences.

According to the latest NYPD data, graffiti complaints have risen on de Blasio’s watch, from 7,952 in 2014 to 8,949 in 2016 — up 12.5 percent. Meanwhile, graffiti arrests have fallen from 2,847 to 1,873 — down 34.2 percent. That’s how more crime and less enforcement look.

Malliotakis should promise an anti-graffiti clampdown — make more arrests, sentence offenders to significant jail time, and force them to clean up their aerosolized destruction in their own home zip codes, while clad in prison garb. Once graffiti vandals’ neighbors watch them erase their hideous damage, this crime will stop being “cool” and will wane dramatically.

Clean up the subways.

New York’s underground-railroad system, once a mass-transit marvel, now suffers delays, equipment failures, track fires, and even derailments under de Blasio. While Democratic governor Andrew Cuomo largely bears responsibility for the subways, an engaged mayor could make a huge difference. Here, too, de Blasio has been detached and ineffective. His biggest relevant headlines involve an order to police to flush homeless people from a subway station before de Blasio waltzed in for a photo op.

According to Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA) figures, delays have zoomed from 28,000 per month in 2012 (under Bloomberg) to some 70,000 per month this year (under de Blasio) — a 150 percent increase.

De Blasio's solution? Class warfare! He wants — what else? — a new levy on “the rich” to subsidize maintenance, plus low fares for poor passengers.

“We need a millionaire's tax so people who travel in first class pay their fair share so the rest of us can get around,” Mayor de Bolshevik said on August 7. He contradicts his own Office of Management and Budget, which does not squirt venom at Gotham's top earners. Page 40 of NYC OMB's latest *Tax Revenue Forecasting Documentation* states: “The one percent of filers reporting income over \$500,000 accounted for 49 percent of tax liability.”

Malliotakis should propose performance incentives for contractors who deliver badly needed repairs. Just as then-governor Pete Wilson (R., Calif.) sped the reconstruction of the Santa Monica Freeway after the 1994 Northridge earthquake flattened it, those who upgrade the subway system should score bonuses if they finish early or pay penalties if they lag.

Even more bold: Why not advocate charter subways? Like charter schools, subways would remain public, but could be managed by private parties, under contract with City Hall. The private-sector Central Park Conservancy has made Manhattan's public-sector forest sparkle. Similarly, private parties could bid to operate subway stations and even subway lines. The MTA could pay them based on cleanliness, crime, ridership, and punctuality. Going further, a private, for-profit company called Heathrow Airport Holdings owns and successfully operates Europe's busiest aviation hub beneath the banner “Our company, your airport.” Since privately owned airports thrive, as the Cato Institute detailed last November in its *Tax & Budget Bulletin*, why not the Times Square shuttle or the 4, 5, and 6 trains?

Clean up the economy.

New York remains hamstrung by sky-high taxes and a red-tape-lusting bureaucrats. Malliotakis should offer bold tax cuts as well as a more market-friendly regulatory ambiance. Slashing the number of professions that require licenses would stimulate entrepreneurship and employment. And the city's Prohibition-era, anti-musician, anti-fun cabaret laws should be catapulted into the Hudson.

Malliotakis also should chop public-sector retirement expenses by scrapping “pension spiking.” Government workers should earn decent pensions based on their average wages across their entire careers. Instead, many swell their pensions by ballooning their late-career compensation via excessive overtime. These bloated retirement costs are crushing Gotham's taxpayers, who only can fantasize about such payouts.

Clean up City Hall.

Bill de Blasio is the poster boy for pay-to-play. Top donors have used his personal e-mail address to request and receive, among other things, a water-bill reduction from \$650,000 to about \$125,000 — 80 percent off! De Blasio's high-dollar contributors have enjoyed special mayoral access, his support for a Bronx-to-Queens streetcar, de Blasio's personal intervention in a restaurateur's back-rent dispute, and much more.

De Blasio insists that this is normal.

“We will be showing you more and more in the coming weeks, a stunning number of donors and supporters not only did not get things they hoped they would get, they got rejection of things they hoped they would get because we ran a government that was clean and appropriate,” de

Blasio promised in May 2016. He spent 16 months compiling that list. De Blasio released that “stunning number” of people who put up cash and got nothing in return:

Four.

In a September 1 *Medium* article, “How We Make Decisions in the Era of Big Money Politics,” de Blasio cited two unnamed donors who requested, but did not receive, City Hall’s special help. He also recycled the stories of two other frustrated rent-seekers who could not turn their high-level access into gold.

In Quinnipiac University’s most recent head-to-head match-ups among mayoral candidates, released July 31, Malliotakis scored 22 percent to de Blasio’s 57 percent. “This compares to a 64–21 percent Democratic lead May 17,” the pollsters concluded. While de Blasio’s lead remains daunting, it is way down from the 73 percent of the ballots that he won in 2013.

“New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio’s job approval rating is wilting in the summer heat and now stands at 50–42 percent, down from 60–34 percent in a May 17 Quinnipiac University Poll,” the survey said. “New York City voters are split 46–46 percent on whether de Blasio deserves reelection, a big swing from May 17 when voters said 57–35 percent that he did deserve reelection.”

De Blasio’s strongest weapon is his potential reelection’s air of inevitability. If Malliotakis can boost her name ID and visibility, and voters begin to consider her a viable alternative, de Blasio’s mile-wide, millimeter-deep reelection numbers could start to tumble.

The cash-for-favors-fueled, perennially late, afternoon-nap-taking de Blasio is far from loved. Indeed, he is largely scorned across the political spectrum. He earned almost universal disdain when he skipped the swearing-in ceremony for 524 newly minted local cops, just days after NYPD officer Miosotis Familia, 48, was assassinated in a police vehicle. While the city erupted in grief over Alexander Bonds’s murder of the well-liked single mother of three, de Blasio jetted off to Hamburg, Germany, to lead anti-Trump protests during July’s G-7 summit. The *New York Post* captured Gotham’s collective revulsion through a photo of de Blasio beneath this priceless front-page headline:

Deutsch Bag

“Bill de Blasio has nearly tripled the number of special assistants at City Hall from the 109 that Mayor Bloomberg had,” Malliotakis tells me. “He is spending a whopping \$53.4 million on City Hall Staff, which I pledged to cut by at least 10 percent. I can’t understand why someone needs 300 special assistants, especially when we aren’t getting results. Our homeless and transit crises are getting worse, quality of life has declined, and 80 percent of students who graduate the public school system and enter a city university need to take remedial writing, reading, and math. This is an issue of incompetence and mismanagement, not one of lacking resources.”

Bill de Blasio can be beaten, though it won’t be easy. What would help is for the well-spoken and fresh-faced Nicole Malliotakis to run beneath the banner: Clean Up New York!