

Transcript: Mayor Eric Adams Delivers Remarks at NYPD's Annual Medal Day

June 7, 2022

Mayor Eric Adams: Thank you, commissioner. And as I heard the commissioner speak, reached into my pocket and I pulled out this photo. This photo is Robert Venable. He was one of my closest friends when I was a transit police officer. Robert died when he was shot in the head when responding to a job. We were going away that week and going on vacation together. And I thought about Robert also tonight, a few weeks ago when Patty Lynch and I were in the Bronx, when Officer Vargas was shot in the arm. When we looked at the video, the assailant who was out with a repeated history of violence, he shot at Officer Vargas and Officer Vargas did not run away.

Mayor Adams: He ran towards the gunfire, but that was not the most impactful moment for me that night. As we stood in the hospital room, over in the corner was his fiancé. And in the same room was his father-in-law, who was part of another unit to try to rid our streets of guns. This job that we find ourselves in, during the mid-90s, everyone was on our side. Every newspaper, every court, every judge, every prosecutor, every lawmaker knew that there was an urgency to bring back a sense of normality to our city that we all love. The period when we were experiencing 2,000 homicides a year, 98,000 robberies, and almost an equivalent amount of felonious assaults.

Mayor Adams: You didn't have Twitter. You didn't have Facebook. You didn't have Instagram. You were able to go out and do the job to make our cities safe. We're not there now. And there are days we feel like we are all alone. There are days we feel as though that no one is seeing the urgency and the reality of allowing people out every day that are committing these acts of senseless violence.

Mayor Adams: And there are days you feel as though, "Why am I doing this job? Why am I putting myself in harm's way every day? Putting my families through the trauma of every time they read a paper or a news story, hoping that it was not me, never to be able to really escalate because it is going to be one of the members of the department in some way." Why are we doing this?

Mayor Adams: We're doing it because we believe in it. We're doing it because we know what stands between safety and those who want to destroy our city, of the heroes we are acknowledging today and the heroes that are performing this job every day. When I retired, I say all the time, hugging my mother and feeling the weight of her body. As I understood that mom did those 22 years with me, never able to go to sleep until she heard from me and said, "Mom, I'm home."

Mayor Adams: That is what our families go through. That is what they experience. We have an obligation not to be distracted, not to surrender, not to give up. And I want to say this to the young people that are here, and those of your family members. I'm going to repeat this over and over again. Read the Pledge of Allegiance to them. This is our country. And as the mayor of the City of New York, I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America. This is a great country, and this country sits under the tree of freedom because you water that tree with your blood, but we cannot allow our city to go backwards. The men and women we are honoring here, 44 of them, 15 units, 34 lost their lives on 9/11 and from the byproduct of that terrorist attack.

Mayor Adams: We may honor those 34 on 9/11, but I want to honor something else. 9/12, we got up. Teachers taught, builders built, police officers did their jobs. We showed the entire globe what we are made of, and when we survived that terrorist attack, we were able to allow America know that they can respond again to any threat or danger that they experienced. So, COVID was not 9/11. It was not terrorism, but it brought terror. We lost officers. We lost family members. Our economy took a devastating hit. Our children had the uncertainty of knowing what the next day would be in school.

Mayor Adams: So once again, we're going to get up. We're going to show the country the resiliency of New York City, because we are not going to surrender. We're not going to surrender to anything that we are faced with. My brother and I were proud to be members of the New York City Police Department. We're proud to serve. We're proud to dedicate our lives, and we're proud of the men and women we are honoring today. God bless the NYPD, God bless NYC, and God bless America. Thank you.

###