

Transcript: Mayor Eric Adams Delivers Remarks at World Elder Abuse Awareness Day Event

June 15, 2022

Commissioner Lorraine Cortés-Vázquez, Department for the Aging: Thank you everyone again for being here on World Elder Abuse Awareness Day. I'm Lorraine Cortés-Vázquez, the commissioner for the New York City Department for the Aging. I'm joined today by colleagues, advocates, partners who have a deep commitment to making sure that older adults are...

Commissioner Cortés-Vázquez: Thank you all. Wait, we've been joined by someone super special. Okay!

Commissioner Cortés-Vázquez: I'm here with advocates and colleagues whose commitment to older adults is unparalleled. They include the New York City deputy commissioner for community affairs, Mark Stewart, who has worked with us tirelessly to make sure that at the local level and at the local precincts, each one of our programs is supported. And it's also here because we work with them on high crime areas. So thank you, deputy commissioner.

Commissioner Cortés-Vázquez: I'm also joined by none other than the deputy mayor, Anne Williams-Isom, who is responsible for health and human service portfolio. She has dedicated her life to making sure that families in New York are well taken care of, and that we advocate for children. She has now become one of the strongest advocates for older adults, and that is our deputy commissioner.

Commissioner Cortés-Vázquez: We're also joined by Cecile Noel from the Mayor's Office to End Domestic and Gender-Based Violence. It is Cecile and the department's partnership is very strong, and we work through her family centers. And so thank you to Cecile.

Commissioner Cortés-Vázquez: And we are also joined by great community partners who are on the ground every day, dealing with elder abuse victims and their families, and none other than Bill Dionne from the Carter Burden Network.

Commissioner Cortés-Vázquez: Bill bought a fan club and we also have Catherine Martinez from Neighborhood SHOPP, another strong partner. That we are joined today by the greatest public safety advocate in the city of New York, our mayor, Mayor Eric Adams. And he is, and one of the things that I can say is that this issue is so important, because his presence here is important. Because he's underscoring the importance of this issue. We want to thank Mayor Adams, because under him we've been able to expand elder abuse services at the ground level. We now have over \$4 million committed to elder abuse services. Thank you, Mr. Mayor.

Commissioner Cortés-Vázquez: While the numbers have not increased, and deputy commissioner and I had this conversation, they have not increased. They've only been increasing in certain precincts, but the nature of the crimes are heinous, and the nature of the violence is something that we need to stop. So with that, I'm going to thank Mayor Adams and have him give us some words. Thank you so much, Mayor Adams.

Mayor Eric Adams: Good to see you with our team. And I love this. I love this head tie.

Mayor Adams: You've got this, you got this. I say it over and over again. We got this, New York, no matter what we come up against. This is so important. Everyone that knows no matter where you are, no matter where you travel to, no matter what borough you in, everyone is clear on one thing. I am a self-admitted mama's boy. And the power of our older adults here in this city, it is imperative as our commissioner has stated, who's a real champion around this issue, that is something that we are focusing on, because your wisdom is much needed. Your compassion, your caring.

Mayor Adams: We are who we are as a city because you are who you are throughout the years. Some of you were retired public servants. Some of you raised children. Some of you did domestic work. Some of you ran major corporations and companies. You have consistently played a vital role for this city. And this is why it is crucial that we play our role. And so today we are saying on World Elder Abuse Awareness Day, we recommit to protecting and supporting older New Yorkers. That is so important. And so crucial to us.

Mayor Adams: Those who are suffering home or anywhere in a center, we are saying, don't do it in silence. You are not alone. New York City is an age-inclusive city, and it is here for you every day, all day. We want to be your support, your protectors and deliverer of services to our older adults. As we expand on our elder abuse services with two additional community-based programs in Brooklyn and in Queens providing support and services for those in need.

Mayor Adams: Our amazing commissioner understood this and this is why she pushed this forward, because access to support is as important as having the support. If it's not accessible, then you don't have the support that you knew you need. We know that many older New Yorkers feel socially isolated and COVID-19 has only aggravated the problem. And we know that isolation increases the risk of abuse, including financial, emotional, and physical. As the borough president, we communicated with organizations to talk to banks so they can monitor the financial abuse that comes with older New Yorkers' abuse.

Mayor Adams: We want to make sure that your money is not being targeted or stolen from you as you go on to carry the particular needs that you have every day. So this city is doing all that it can to ensure that older New Yorkers know where to turn to get help. That is crucial for us.

Mayor Adams: And I want to thank DFTA and Commissioner Lorraine Cortés-Vázquez for the work that she's doing to fight this important issue that is often ignored. You don't hear about it enough, but we know it is happening in our city. And we want to say silence is not how you solve a problem. Acknowledging the problem and coming up with real plans to fix the problem.

Mayor Adams: And we're encouraging New Yorkers who are suffering elder abuse, or you are aware of someone, to call 311 so you could be connected to the nearest providers. Our seniors have been and will continue to be the backbone of our city. They have been for us all of these years, we are going to be for them as the years move forward. And so, although I lost my mother last year in April, I know when every time I move through the city, I have hundreds of thousands of new mothers and grandmothers that will always be there for me to keep our city focused. And if anyone knows better than you, no matter how difficult things are, we know you got this. We got this. We are New Yorkers. Thank you very much. Thank you, Commissioner.

Commissioner Cortés-Vázquez: We are blessed to have him at this time in New York City. Thank you, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor Adams: Thank you.

Commissioner Cortés-Vázquez: I also now have the pleasure and distinct honor of introducing our deputy commissioner for community affairs, Mark Stewart. Mark, would you say a few words? I'm going to present to you...

Mark Stewart, Deputy Commissioner, Community Affairs: Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Lorraine, thank you. My name is Mark Stewart, deputy commissioner of community affairs. Before I came here, I spoke to Lorraine. I said, "They wrote me out a speech, but I can't read from paper. Comes from the heart." And community affairs and being the commissioner, my range is very wide. I have a whole community, and when I came to the PD, we were doing a lot of youth programs and I said, "What about the parents? What about the grandparents and the elderly? What are we doing for them? We're opening up basketball courts and we're doing youth things, but what about the elderly?" So my administration now, we have plans we're putting in place. I don't forget.

Stewart: I'm a double threat. I was once a detective in the Police Department for 16 years. I worked elderly cases. I got calls from banks. Somebody's trying to take out \$10,000 out of a bank account. We have to be aware of the elderly, not just the Police Department, but all of us. If you see something that's not right, call 911. We could set up as much programs and we could come out here and we can fight and fight, but the Police Department needs your help and we need you to assist us.

Stewart: I'm going to read a couple of them. I have to. My father just passed in September. He was very sick. And I used to go to the homes, and I used to see him because my mother was no longer to care for him. And I went to these homes, I realized I used to look around and say, "Who's coming to visit this person? Nobody." So my mother, the kind hearted person that she is, she came and she used to bring gifts. She used to play music for them. And I used to say, "Mom, where's their family?" That's something that we don't really think about. Where's the family at? And some people don't have family. So it was up to me, my myself, my sister, to be part of a family and spread the love to those who didn't have any. In community affairs, that's what we do. We spread the love, because there's people out in this city who are all alone, and what do we do with them? We forget about them.

Stewart: Crime reports come in. This is probably the most underrated crime that New York City Police Department deals with. And you ask yourself why? Where's the family? We have to keep our special eye on caretakers. Unfortunately, not all of them are honest. We hope they would be, but not all of them are.

Stewart: And I watched my father in the bed and I watched, they took care of him. And then I watched my mother take care of him. Completely different. So just to let you know, when the Police Department, this is very personal to me, the elderly, and how we deal, and how we move forward.

Stewart: The Police Department, we carry out wellness checks to go check on elderly people. See how they're doing. But we don't check on all of them because we can't. So again, we reach out. If you're a neighbor, you live on the same block, and you know somebody's elderly, let's go check on them. See how they're doing.

Stewart: We know it could suffer physical emotion, financial natures, people trying to scam. And they're out there. How do we combat that? You and the Police Department. We can't do it all. So as I stand here before you, I'm telling you, we need your help to protect the elderly. We need your help to protect the people who protected us when we were younger. We have to give back, each and every one of us, we have to give back. And we have to be aware of our surroundings and their surroundings. So it's not a one man deal. It's a community deal. So on that, I thank you from the Police Department, and I'll be watching out for you. God bless.

Commissioner Cortés-Vázquez: Thank you, deputy commissioner. And I want you to know that we are your family, and we have an entire network that is your family, and we will work together with you. Thank you so much.

Stewart: Thank you.

Commissioner Cortés-Vázquez: Now I have the honor of bringing up my partner in government, Commissioner Cecile Noel who runs the Mayor's Office for Gender Equity and Domestic Violence, and who has always opened up the family centers to make sure that the family centers are all inclusive. As the mayor said, this is an age-inclusive city. And so that those family centers also serve the elderly. Thank you, Cecile. Won't you say a few words?

Commissioner Cecile Noel, Mayor's Office to End Domestic Violence and Gender-Based Violence: Okay. We need to make some noise out here, guys. We need to make some noise. We need to make those cameras know why we're here. Why are we here today? We're here to stand against elder abuse. Why are we here? Why are we here guys? To stand against elder abuse. Why are we here? I can't hear you?

Audience: Stand against elder abuse.

Commissioner Noel: One more time. I can't hear you.

Audience: Stand against elder abuse.

Commissioner Noel: That's right. And we want everyone around here to know why we're here. Why we have our elders out here today. Why we are here in the sun, but we're here because we know that they're folks we need to protect. We need to stand up for them. You need to stand up for them. I need to stand up for them. All of us need to stand up for them. So I am Cecile Noel, and I am the commissioner for the Mayor's Office to End Domestic and Gender-Based Violence. In addition to operating the family justice centers, ENDGBV collaborates with city agencies, community-based organizations, to provide survivors with access to critical services and support. Critical services and support. The Department of the Aging and our partners at JASA. Yay.

[Applause]

Commissioner Noel: Carter Burden Center. Yay.

[Applause]

Commissioner Noel: Neighborhood SHOPP. Let me hear it. Let me hear it. And the Community Agency for Senior Citizens play an important role in the city's response to elder abuse.

Commissioner Noel: Thank you, Commissioner Cortéz-Vásquez, Bill Dionne, with the Carter Burden Center Network, Katherine Martinez of Neighborhood SHOPP, the NYPD, the New York City Council, AARP, Live On New York, and our advocacy communities for your tireless, and I do mean tireless, dedication and boundless efforts

to keep older New Yorkers safe. To the mayor, our esteemed mayor, thank you for your vital support and all that you are doing to keep all New Yorkers safe and free from harm.

Commissioner Noel: Also, I want to welcome our new program providers to the team. I look forward to the days ahead of us working together to bring services to survivors. Far too many of our older New Yorkers are experiencing abuse in their homes. In 2021, the NYPD responded to over 16,000 domestic incidents involving elder victims. An average of more than 40 a day. This is unacceptable in our city, and it won't exist in our city. We're going to work to end that.

Commissioner Noel: And like domestic violence, these cases are seriously under reported, and many experiencing abuse are not connected to services. We also know that during the pandemic, New Yorkers experienced increasing levels of isolation and unprecedented challenges and barriers to accessing care, assistance, and support.

Commissioner Noel: My office is committed to working alongside the Department of the Aging and the advocacy community. That means all of you to support programming that meets the unique needs of older survivors, which can include medical treatment, care for cognitive decline, and empowers older survivors. We are committed to working with our partners to raise awareness and educate New Yorkers about the issue and services and programs that are available to seniors, so we can ensure that seniors do not suffer in silence. On this World Elder Abuse Awareness Day, let us come together in showing survivors the road to safety, recovery, healing, and a life without violence. You all, we all are key to providing that safety for survivors. Thank you.

Commissioner Cortés-Vázquez: All right. We know that the sun is hot, and we need to get all of us out of the sun, but this work cannot be done without the people on the ground. And we are going to thank the mayor for his time. He has a very busy schedule. It's been an honor to have you here, but we have two programs that we're going to hear from who do this every day. And they are Bill Dionne from Carter Burden. So thank you, Bill.

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Commissioner Cortés-Vázquez: And there is a team that I have to thank at the Department for the Aging who make this work possible at our level. And I want to thank our senior director, Aurora Simone, for all of your tireless work in this area. I want to

thank the mayor. Thank the deputy commissioner. Thank the deputy mayor who's been a strong ally, and our partners on the ground. And Cecile, of course, my sister in public service. Thank you all for coming. Let's get out of this hot sun, and you rock.

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