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**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR ERIC ADAMS DELIVERS REMARKS AT UNITED STATES  
CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION SERVICES NATURALIZATION CEREMONY**

**Commissioner Manuel Castro, Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs:** Welcome everyone. My name is Manuel Castro and I am the commissioner of the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs. Today, as you reflect on your journey that led you to this moment and begin your life as citizens of the United States of America, I want to encourage you to use your new privileges as citizens of this country to support your neighbor, your fellow New Yorker, and especially the most vulnerable amongst us, such as newly arrived immigrants, who, like you, at some point aspire to one day stand here to fully be welcomed as Americans.

**Commissioner Castro:** I want to congratulate you, your family, and your community who supported you along this journey. Thank you to the team at the New York Office of the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services. And thank you to the team at the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs. I'm joined here today by Miosotis Muñoz, our deputy commissioner of external affairs, Shaina Coronel, our director of communications. And I also want to thank Cesar Vargas, our legal counsel, a fellow dreamer and officer of the U.S. Army Reserves for making this possible.

**Commissioner Castro:** But I especially want to thank Mayor Eric Adams for allowing us to hold this citizenship ceremony at the steps of City Hall. After two decades of not happening at our City Hall, we get to celebrate you, your family, and your journey to this moment. Thank you Mayor Adams for being the champion of all immigrant communities, champion of the newest New Yorkers and the champion of our newest Americans. Thank you.

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**Mayor Eric Adams:** Want to thank District Director Gray, Commissioner Castro, and all those behind the scene who are making this possible. Such a significant moment. And I am 61 years old and have been a citizen from the date of birth, but my number of years being a citizen does not matter, because day one, you have all the rights and privileges of being a citizen of the United States. It doesn't matter if it's 60 years, if it's one year, if it's two years. You are now citizens of this country and you are a part of this elite membership, and you should be proud of that.

**Mayor Adams:** But let me ask you this question. You tell me, who am I talking about? Come to America, may leave family members home, take any job to provide resources, go to school, maybe at night, may start a small business. Willing to do whatever is possible to participate in the American Dream. Willing to stand up for the country. If I were to ask you, what group am I describing, you'll have a difficult time telling me because that's the pathway of every immigrant group that has ever come to this country. If you look under the fingernails of every group, you'll see that they climbed up the mountain of opportunity and hope one hand at a time, and you'll see the dirt and grime of saying, I want to be part of the American dream. The uniqueness of America. This is the only country where dream is attached to its name. Only place else. There's no other place where you have attached dream to the country. But there's something else unique about this country. This is the only country where we say don't abandon your native country to embrace your new adopted country. Our secret weapon is the dash. It's that dash that sits between our cultures, Ghanaian dash American, African dash American, Chinese dash American, Ecuadorian dash American, Polish, German. You hold onto your culture and you bring it to America and make this unique experience that we call the American dream. This is a great moment for you.

**Mayor Adams:** Countless number of people have been pursuing to participate and be part of this unique membership club we call American citizens. And we're not perfect. In fact, we're perfectly imperfect, but that is the experience that we are participating in. We're not supposed to be perfect. Perfection is not American, dedication is American. And there's something unique about our immigrants and new arrivals to this country. They're hungry. They're hungry. They're hungry to be part of this experience. During the height of COVID, as I moved around COVID and saw businesses shut down and lack of participation, you know what I saw? I saw immigrant businesses stay open. I saw them continue to work. I saw them understanding that this is an opportunity that America presents, and you should be proud of that.

**Mayor Adams:** You're so much part of this country now, as not only citizens, but even prior to being citizens fighting in the armed services. Those of you who are willing to shed blood to water the tree of freedom that all of us sit under the shades from the hateful, divisive actions of those who want to harm this country. But we need a renewal of patriotism. There was a survey that came out that stated 52% of Americans will not defend this country if it's attacked by foreign enemies. I know and you know that you would defend. I know and you know that you would stand up for this country. I know and you know that there's something great about this country. And I know when you said that pledge, you felt something special in your heart. You wanted to say at last, at last. And then you are a twofer. You don't win just by becoming an American citizen. You won because you are an American citizen in the greatest city on the globe, New York City. So you are winning all the way around.

[Applause]

**Mayor Adams:** I'm so excited for you. And I know in the audience, I believe, Francisco Moya's mother is here. His dad came and fought in Vietnam to eke out a living. And now he is the councilman that represents his councilmanic district. Or how about Commissioner Castro — came here as a dreamer, crossing the border with his family. Now he's the first Mexican-

American to head the Office of Immigrant Affairs. From a dreamer to making dreams for other people. And when you look over my administration, Ydanis Rodriguez came here barely being able to speak English, still have his Dominican accent, but he is the first Latino to head the Department of Transportation in the largest, most important city in this country.

**Mayor Adams:** And when you look all over my administration, you see yourselves. You see individuals who came here in pursuit of a dream, and now they are in place to ensure that you can get your dream. That's the secret weapon of America. It's not no matter where you start out, it's where you can end up. You believe, you pursue. You take advantage. You defend, you stand tall and nothing you will enjoy more than when you travel back to your native land and you are able to pull out that passport with the blue cover and back and the gold lettering. And they ask you, who are you? You say I'm an American citizen. I'm an American citizen.

**Mayor Adams:** And that's respected and admired all over the globe. And this is the first time in 20 years that we've allowed this ceremony to take place here on these steps. To 24, 23 nations who are here, you are now ambassadors for others who want to come and participate in this American dream. You pursue the dream. That is your dream, but it is the dream. Too many people who are attempting to pursue the dream are living the nightmarish reality as they attempt to cross borders and come and participate in the dream. They are turned away by other states, but not here in New York, in New York City. We're the keeper of the dream. This is America's city and you must go out and ensure everyone who attempts to get the dream has an opportunity to acquire the dream.

**Mayor Adams:** And so I thank you on behalf of every New Yorker, every American, everyone who has fought to protect the dash. You are now members of the club, the defenders of the dash, bring your uniqueness, bring your culture, bring your energy, bring your spirit. Only here can you go to a Chinese restaurant, have a Nigerian cook make a Russian meal that he learned from his Polish girlfriend. Only in America, only in New York. Congratulations to you all.

[Applause]

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