

# Transcript: Mayor Eric Adams Appears Live on WBAI 99.5 FM's "Driving Forces"

April 29, 2022

**Celeste Katz Marston:** So Mayor Eric Adams, a pleasure to welcome you back to WBAI.

**Mayor Eric Adams:** Pleasure to be on WBAI. You know, for so many years I have been on this show, and I've talked about these real important issues that impact us.

**Katz Marston:** Mr. Mayor, just to start with the crime issue, because obviously that's been on a lot of people's minds, in your speech in Brooklyn earlier in the week, you said, quote, "We will do what's necessary to make all of our community safe." As you're parceling that out, what is sort of top of mind for you? What do you want people who are listening to this program right now to know about what you are going to do to make the city safer?

**Mayor Adams:** Well, it's a combination, and I talk about this all the time, that there are many rivers that see the sea of violence, in our city and in our country, and we dam each river, or we are going to continue to fail. One of the most important rivers to dam is how I implement police practices in this city, and it has to be both justice and safety. We can't go back to the days of heavy-handed policing, and that is what I am focusing on.

**Mayor Adams:** What have we done thus far? Number one, we put in place an anti-gun unit, neighborhood safety teams. We have been zeroing in on guns and gangs. We have removed over 2,500 guns off the streets of the city in the last few months. I want New Yorkers just to think about that number. It states that we have a constant flow, so although NYPD are doing their jobs, the constant flow of guns is just making this challenging.

**Mayor Adams:** Then we have to dam the river of our court system. The system is clogged. We are seeing individuals who are carrying guns out the next day, very violent

people are persistent about harming innocent New Yorkers. If we don't start getting the courts up and operating, it's going to continue to feed into this violence during the summer months. But at the same time, we have to be preventive as we deal with the intervention, and that's why when you look at the budget, we highlighted what we're doing around dyslexia screening. 30% of our prisoners in this country are dyslexic, are dealing with mental health issues that we are facing – of leading and supporting our foster care children. 6 to 700 age out every year, and we know the outcomes. Without the right support, it's just not going to allow them to be productive citizens. This is a complex approach to a complex problem that we need the federal and state to also make sure the rivers, that they are responsible, that are dammed as well.

**Katz Marston:** And Mayor Adams, one of the focal points has been crime in the subways, people fearful about riding the trains. We've seen some horrifying incidents of mass violence, but we've also seen individual incidents. One of the things that you've talked about is helping people who are homeless out of train stations, off the trains. Some people have been critical of that, because they say there's nowhere for these people to go. Some people have been specifically critical that handing out literature, brochures about homeless shelters that sound better than what we have now, but actually aren't open and functioning, isn't really the answer. What do you say to critics who say that basically, handing out a flyer is not going to solve this problem?

**Mayor Adams:** I tell those critics about coming into the subway stations and giving [inaudible]. It's easy to be a [inaudible] spectator and sit in the bleachers of life, and don't want to get in the field and help people in need. Our everyday brothers and sisters and neighbors are living on the streets, and they're living on the subway system. That is not dignified, and that's not going to happen while I'm the mayor of the City of New York. I've visited our shelters. I know the investment we're making in safe haven beds. I know the conditions of our shelters, as we've continued to make them safer every day, but no one is going to tell me that living in a tunnel, or living in a tent with human waste, drug paraphernalia, unable to have a shower, food, medical care, I am not accepting the belief that that is acceptable in this city, and I know my team is doing a good job. The first two weeks with the transit initiative, we only had 22 people that took our services. Now, 700 people have responded to our service, because we're building trust.

**Mayor Adams:** So all the people who are critics, stop criticizing, and come inside the subway system, and be a partner with us. We've known this homeless problem has existed for generations, and people continue to stand on the sidelines and say what's wrong. Stop saying what's wrong and come be a partner, like Norman Siegel is going to

do, of getting volunteers to join us in being compassionate for our brothers and sisters who are living on hard times.

**Katz Marston:** And Mayor Eric Adams, just one more question on transit before I let Jeff have a moment here, get a word in, but you said that if people see transit officers or police officers on their phones, not paying attention to what's going on around them, they should give you a call. Has anybody called you, anybody sent you a picture?

**Mayor Adams:** People sent me several pictures, and the purpose of the pictures is not enforcement, it's not to harm people. The purpose of the pictures is to really do the proper training on what's expected. Think about the last eight years in this city. Over the last eight years, we have witnessed the mixed messages that we've sent police officers. Someone jumps a turnstile, we say we're not going to prosecute that. Someone decides they're going to walk into a store and steal something, there's been a low mood to actually prosecute those repeated cases. You can't send mixed messages in a city as diverse as New York, with so many different people, and how they think. I'm sending a clear message. Disorder is not acceptable. If someone can't pay their fare, we've invested a substantial amount of tax dollars into the reduced fare MetroCard, so we can go after those New Yorkers and give them the assistance they need, and there are ways to get on the subway system if you can't pay. Jumping the turnstile is not one of them.

**Mayor Adams:** I am not going to buy into the theory that because we have an expectation of behavior, that that is criminalizing poverty. That is not. My budget is a budget that goes to those areas of poverty and gives the assistance to New Yorkers, so that we can help people during this difficult time. Any and everything goes, that is not acceptable.

**Jeff Simmons:** And Mayor, I know we only have a few minutes left. I do want to ask one more crime question, and then I know Celeste has questions. We've been focusing, today's show, a lot on data that came out from the Anti-Defamation League, that really showed a significant increase in antisemitic incidents in New York, in New York State, and with the majority of them happening in New York City. Why do you feel that people feel it is okay to attack Jews?

**Mayor Adams:** Well, I think it's a combination. I think it's the city that we live in and the country that we live in. I believe that the former president made people comfortable in

displaying, openly, some of their hate and dislikes. It's not to say that antisemitism came about during the former administration, but it's clear that in 2021, it was one of the most highest level of antisemitism in our city, and in previous years, you saw a steady increase in antisemitism. But I think the approach must be a holistic approach. What do I mean by that? Number one, there should be a no plea bargain bargaining rule if someone is charged with antisemitism. We should not plea bargain it down to harassment. The person should be fully prosecuted based on the hate crime that they displayed.

**Mayor Adams:** Number two, we are a segregated city, and our children are constantly being raised in a segregated city, and we have to stop having a segregated city. We have to cross-pollinate cultures and ideas, because just as we've seen an increase in antisemitism, you're seeing what's happened to our AAPI community, our LGBTQ+ community. Hate is finding a root in our city, and we need to send a strong message that hate has no place here. Education, in our schools. Let's teach how we learn from each other and celebrate our diversity. Let's make sure we do the things like Breaking Bread, Building Bonds, 100 dinners, 10 people at each dinner, from different cultures, so we can learn from each other. We have to be more aggressive and proactive by stopping the feeders of hate.

**Simmons:** And I know in the final few minutes, I just want to squeeze in something. I know that tomorrow, you're going to be delivering one of the eulogies for firefighter Timothy Klein, who was killed earlier this week when a ceiling collapsed. What's the message you're going to convey tomorrow at his funeral?

**Mayor Adams:** Well, I met the dad today, and not only was his dad a firefighter, but his grandfather was a police officer. This is a family with a history of serving the people of this city, and I know the tragedies that we are seeing with the loss of life, and it doesn't matter if it's from a firefighter and a young man that also died in that fire, in addition to the firefighter. It is my message that we need each other at this moment. There's been so much pain from COVID, from crime, from the feeling as though that one has been abandoned. We need to live the lives we're living in the spirit of our fallen brothers and sisters who are experiencing this pain every day. That is my message to New Yorkers. We need each other, and I'm going to remain true to my belief that this is one of the greatest cities, and our display of compassion is something that has cascaded throughout this entire country, if not the globe.

**Katz Marston:** You've been very generous with your time, mayor. I just have a couple more very quick questions. Talking more generally about your first 100 days and going forward, on the issue of transparency, there's been some back-and-forth about you releasing your tax forms, your full tax returns. Now you say that you will release some tax information. Can you tell us a little bit more about what information you will be releasing and when you will be releasing it?

**Mayor Adams:** Nope, can't tell you any more about that. I spoke about that for two days, about taxes, and that's not what New Yorkers are asking me every day, and I think those of us who are in the echo chamber, that like to hear stories over and over again, as the mayor, I'm not participating in that. I have to deal with violence. I have to deal with homelessness. I have to deal with real issues that are facing New Yorkers. I did a full conversation on that. When my tax information is released, people will look at that, but I'm not going to have that conversation every day. I've got real issues in this city, and the voters of this city, they want me to address those real issues.

**Katz Marston:** Okay, and look, I understand that you have talked about it before. We thought it was fair to ask you about it, to give you another opportunity to talk about it if you wanted to. The same goes for the advice that the Conflicts of Interest Board would give to your appointees about potential conflicts. That's something that you've talked about. In the general context of being a transparent mayor, is that something that we can look forward to, to seeing the release of those documents?

**Mayor Adams:** I'm sorry. I didn't hear that about... What is it about the Conflict of Interest Board? I didn't hear that.

**Marston:** The Conflict of Interest Board gives advice to your appointees about potential conflicts they may encounter in your service or in the service of the city. Those documents have not been made public. Is that something that we can expect to see made public going forward, advisory opinions to your appointees?

**Mayor Adams:** You totally lost me on that. I file my Conflict of Interest Board documentation every year. Is there something that we're supposed to release that has not been released? Because if it is, we will immediately release. I'm not aware of anything that we're supposed to release to the public, that we have not released. This is the first time I'm hearing that.

**Katz Marston:** Okay, yeah. This would be advisory opinions given to appointees, to members of the cabinet. The conflict of interest board gives advice in the form of a letter, to members of your cabinet, and we have not been able to see those made public, those letters not to you, but to people who are your advisors.

**Mayor Adams:** Well, let me make it clear. We have one of the best Conflicts of Interest Board systems in our city. They give us clear directions on what we're supposed to do and not supposed to do. We're going to abide by all those rules, and if someone is not turning over information that we're required to do so, that will be immediately addressed, and I am not aware of any information that our agency's supposed to turn over, that there's a delay in doing so. If there's something specific we didn't do, please communicate with my legal team. Brendan is my lawyer, and we will make sure that it is addressed, because we're not going to withhold anything we're required to turn over.

**Simmons:** And mayor, we're going to have to wrap up, but I'm going to ask you one final question, end on a lighter note. I will be seeing you on Saturday night at The Inner Circle, when media performs and then you perform. Give us just a preview of what New Yorkers can expect to see from you on Saturday night at The Inner Circle.

**Mayor Adams:** No, I can't. That would tell [inaudible] what to do. [inaudible] show.

[Laughter]

**Simmons:** Well, I'm looking forward to it.

**Mayor Adams:** We're going to have a lot of laughs and enjoy ourselves. I think it's great to see New Yorkers laugh as much as possible. We had enough sadness and pain. A little laughter is good for the soul.

**Simmons:** Mayor Eric Adams, thank you so much for joining Celeste Katz Marston and myself here on WBAI this afternoon.

**Mayor Adams:** Thank you. Take care.

###

