

Transcript: Mayor Eric Adams Appears Live on NY1's "Mornings on 1"

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Kiernan: The mayor is with me this morning to talk about that and a whole lot of topics. You wanted time to fix Rikers. Good to have you here this morning to talk about this.

Mayor Eric Adams: No, thank you. Thank you and it's a full day every day for me.

Kiernan: That's it. Why do you want control of Rikers? If the federal government wants Rikers, why not let them take a run at it? It's been such a difficult problem over decades.

Mayor Adams: Yesterday was the answer to the question you just stated. I was on Rikers Island at a graduation ceremony from those who are incarcerated. I saw that amazing principle. This is not just about putting in people to oversee a correctional facility that has been broken for decades. This is about people who are committed to understanding that we have to put in place a correctional facility that will not continue to have young people come back over and over again. I want time to also do those special things while they're incarcerated.

Kiernan: What's going to be different this time?

Mayor Adams: Well, I think that the judge pointed it out. Molina has the right character, the right experience. We are showing a decrease in some of the violent actions on Rikers Island. He moved away some of the top leadership. He's bringing in more leadership. He's moving in the right direction and he turned over the plan. They looked at it and said two thumbs up. Let's give them an opportunity.

Kiernan: All morning I have been talking about the fact that sources tell New York 1 that Mayor Adams is about to endorse Kathy Hochul in the governor's race. I think we've got some video coming in from the location where there will be a rally this morning. Let's put it straight to you. Are you endorsing Kathy Hochul this morning?

Mayor Adams: Stay tuned.

Kiernan: You will be at that rally though.

Mayor Adams: I will be at that rally.

Kiernan: What is it about Kathy Hochul that has made for a good working relationship over these six months that you've been in office?

Mayor Adams: New York has witnessed over COVID the tension between the executives in both the city and state. When you look at how we are navigating our way out of COVID, how you see increasing ridership in our commuter rails, how you are seeing passing some very difficult. When I left Albany, people told me it was not possible to pass even some of the criminal justice reform we were looking for. She has really assisted in doing so and we want to continue a partnership.

Kiernan: Why did you wait until now to make this endorsement?

Mayor Adams: I was caught up with budgets. I had a budget in the city, a budget in the state, dealing with crime. A full time recovery of our economy and our city. This is the right time. We're near the election day and we're going to get out the votes.

Kiernan: You've got a fellow Brooklynite in this race, in Jumaane Williams. Have you spoken to him about this endorsement?

Mayor Adams: Yes. Spoke with him over the weekend and Jumaane, I think serves a real role as a public advocate. He brings a vision to what he believes that office should do, but I believe that we're making the right decision.

Kiernan: I want to switch gears to that affordable housing announcement you made yesterday. Affordable housing, better conditions in public housing, better support for homeless New Yorkers. Like Rikers, this is a giant problem that every administration has tried to tackle. What is it in your approach that you think can make a difference?

Mayor Adams: Well, I like giant problems. I believe-

Kiernan: Well, we got a lot of them.

Mayor Adams: Yes we do. Every day I get up saying that we put together the right team. We cannot say enough about Jessica Katz and what she did. We're looking at the whole spectrum. Historically, we have ignored NYCHA. We have ignored the homeless problem. We have ignored it. We just looked at units of housing. And you and the media, you have been accurate in stating why are we just talking about units of housing and not placing people who are actually in those units of housing?

Kiernan: You're getting into my next question. Because you were terse with reporters yesterday. You're saying don't just try to tweet one line about this. This is a more nuanced problem-

Mayor Adams: Yes.

Kiernan: -than can be described. But this plan does lack metrics. Other mayors have said we are going to build 10,000 units of affordable housing by this date and it's been a specific trackable metric. Why did you avoid that in this announcement?

Mayor Adams: Because – you had it right. Those who were reported and advocates, they stated for years stop telling us about units of housing. This is what they said. We listened. We listened to the homeless men and women who came to City Hall. We listened to the advocates. What we must do, because no matter what number we reach if we didn't do our jobs correctly, we're just throwing out numbers and that's not what I'm going to do. I'm not going to sit here and say that okay, we're going to get X number of housing. No, we're going to Houston to visit Mayor Turner to see what he did there. We're going to continue to turn over every stone so we can get it right. That's what we are doing and I think New York is going to look at the finished product and say this guy lived up to what he said he was going to do.

Kiernan: We will look back and check in with you on that. There has been a sense as I have watched some of your question and answer sessions with reporters that you are frustrated with the media. That they're not telling your story, that they're trying too hard to trip you up or find an error in what your administration has done rather than deliver the message that you want. Are you frustrated with the media right now?

Mayor Adams: Not frustrated. I think there are some members of the media that lack journalistic integrity. It's about reporting the news. Stop being an advocate. Report the news. Those who are columnists, they write their opinions fine, but let's report the news. When I go to Madison Square Garden and get a standing ovation on Dr. King's day and one drunk heckler heckles me, "Eric booed at Madison Square Garden." Come on. That is not accurate. Let's report the news and let's stop sensationalizing it because I must get a lot of clicks. So I understand that people want to get clicks online. That's not frustration, I'm just being accurate.

Kiernan: But what about the broader tradition? Whether it's back to Mayor Lindsay, Mayor Dinkins, Mayor Giuliani, Mayor de Blasio, Mary Bloomberg. Maybe not as much with Mayor Bloomberg. He didn't always seem to enjoy the back and forth with the press. But certainly even in the de Blasio administration, every single day in the pandemic there was an hour of open question and answer, any topic. That is a valuable back and forth with the public.

Mayor Adams: Without a doubt and I enjoy going back and forth with the media. But if I spend an hour accurately answering your questions and the next day I pick up the paper and you totally-

Kiernan: Something different.

Mayor Adams: -distort the reality, it's something totally different than what I say. I said over and over again I don't believe in solitary confinement. I believe in punitive segregation. The next day I picked up the paper and the person said, "Eric supports solitary confinement." I said why are we doing this then?

Kiernan: I want to look at the numbers from this poll that we conducted last week. We asked New Yorkers-

Mayor Adams: That was a strange poll, by the way.

Kiernan: Yeah. Okay. We can get into that if you want to. But 56% of those who responded said that they believe the city is moving in the wrong direction. Granted it is a difficult time economically. We're still coming out of the pandemic. Does that number surprise you? Do you think 56% of New Yorkers are wrong?

Mayor Adams: No. They have not seen the full layout and the full benefits of what we are trying to do. So it takes a while before what you have felt turned into the reality of what you are seeing. But I'm extremely pleased to see that 64% say I'm fair or better. I don't know how you guys turned fair into poor. Fair means we are going to wait this out and see how this guy's doing. That would've been a fair way to say that and not put it with poor.

Kiernan: We were asking do you approve of the job that the mayor has done?

Mayor Adams: Fair.

Kiernan: I think your quote was that if I have a C grade, that's not the same as an F grade.

Mayor Adams: That's what I was told.

Kiernan: It's not uncommon in polling to do things that way.

Mayor Adams: But do you think fair is a failure? I don't. I think fair is we're waiting to see the results. Give the guy a chance.

Kiernan: Yeah. Look, I'm going to go with the people at Siena who did the poll for us, and we're not going to put any daylight between us on that. But I respect the point that you're making on that. Another story we have on the news this morning is about lifeguards and a shortage of lifeguards. There was a decision made when public pools open on June 28th, that there will not be as many learn to swim programs offered.

Kiernan: No doubt a difficult decision. I said earlier this morning that I worry that that is a short term decision made for a good reason, because there's a labor shortage, but that ultimately it means fewer kids learn to swim. There's the threat of drowning. There is a pipeline of potential lifeguards that won't develop. Is that a decision that your administration will regret?

Mayor Adams: You're right, [Patrick]. We just saw recently the death of two young people and I was a part of advocating for Swim Strong. We're going to examine that. I'm going to reach out to Parks and figure out how can we continue these structures. We

have to have young people learn how to swim. We have a major problem across the country with lifeguard shortages all over, trying to recruit. We're going to see if we can speak to some of our schools where we have swimming programs to get young people engaged and I'm with you, we have to teach our young people how to swim.

Kiernan: Is there a chance that as the summer evolves, maybe some of those programs could be at least partially reinstated? Is that a final decision for the entire summer?

Mayor Adams: I'm on the phone this morning with my commissioner, Sue Donoghue, and say, "Listen, how could we do this? Give me a creative way that we could continue swim instructions." You are 100% right and I feel strongly about it. And I'm going to speak to her and say, "How do we creatively find a way to continue instructions?"

Kiernan: We had some video earlier this morning of a marijuana selling truck getting hauled off by the city Sheriff's Department. The legal mechanism that the sheriff's office did to do that was not actually nothing to do with what they were selling in the truck, it was that they had too many parking tickets that they hadn't paid.

Kiernan: There is this weird situation right now, the architects of this, we're in Albany, that they legalized possession of marijuana, didn't yet legalize the sale of marijuana. It's all over the place. We're in this gray area, this limbo right now. And I understand the problem the NYPD has that they are having trouble figuring out how to enforce this.

Mayor Adams: This is what is called being a creature of Albany. Rules are put in place and we have to figure out how to monitor police and govern based on those rules. What we are going to do is send a clear message that you can't go outside the rules that were in place. I had a meeting with a cannabis roundtable, so we can look at every aspect of cannabis in the city and really figure out exactly what the parameters are with the law that was passed.

Kiernan: But is the NYPD holding on enforcement against some of those trucks and street sellers right now?

Mayor Adams: Well, illegal sales we're not going to allow. In this truck how they were going about doing it we're still examining, but clearly we're not going to allow illegal

sales. These trucks may be falling right below the line, and we have to just continue to monitor, but it is a problem.

Kiernan: Mayor Adams, good to see you this morning. I know that event with Governor Kathy Hochul just a few blocks from here, so we'll let you get out of here and get over there. And we'll watch for you on the live video from there. Thanks for spending some time with us this morning.

Mayor Adams: Thank you. Take care.

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