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NEW YORK, NY 10007

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** October 28, 2022

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**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR ERIC ADAMS HOSTS EVENT THANKING THOSE WHO  
HAVE ASSISTED NYC MANAGE THE ASYLUM SEEKER CRISIS**

**Deputy Mayor Anne Williams-Isom, Health and Human Services:** All right. I'm going to try not to cry. My name is Anne Williams-Isom. I'm the deputy mayor for health and human services, and I've had the responsibility for overseeing much of the response of this effort. I see many familiar faces here, and I wanted to start by saying thank you to everyone.

And as I thought about what I wanted to say today, I was struck that over the past couple of months, we've been talking a lot about storms. It seems like you're either getting ready to go into a storm, in a storm, or getting ready to go into another one. But one of the things about storms, and we spend so much time talking about trauma and the things that are bad, is that they remind us of the bright days. Today is a bright day. It helps us to focus on people and things that bring out the kindness in us, the caring in us, bring out the love in us. So I don't want to just talk about the storms. I want to talk about what we do together. It helps, and people watch us, and they see us, and they're inspired. Our families, our friends, our colleagues, and our communities, and yes, our city sees how we are dealing with crises every day in this city.

In this case, thousands of people came to New York City in need of shelter from a storm in their life. They and their families fled and sought refuge with us. And what did we do? We pulled

together, and we undertook one of the largest humanitarian efforts in recent memory to help our newest neighbors. We led with kindness, with care, and with love. I think about those first days. The folks at MOIA were there for 24/7. I was like, "Has anybody seen Manny Castro and his staff?" They were there no matter what. No matter who was there. Gary Jenkins led his team, and moment after moment was opening shelter after shelter, as we watched the numbers rise, and people didn't even believe that anything was going on at the time. Him and his staff, with care, made sure that they had for all New Yorkers. Zach Iscol and his team came in as an emergency, and looked and saw what they needed to do, and made sure that they pulled together, and so many more. The IGA team, OMB team, DOE, all of the communications folks and our Pastors Monroe and Cabrera, everybody. If you go into my office, there's a big sign, and on it, it says, "Shelter, food, legal, health, mental health, education, intergovernmental, interagency." It was all, all that we had to do together. All the things we needed to help our newest New Yorkers and ourselves process this.

I was on a call with the mayor about two weeks ago with a group of principals who were talking about the amount of young people that have come into their school system. And again, we were all focused on what we needed to do, and how we needed to get it done. And at the end of the call, one of the principals just started to cry. She just said that she just felt like she wanted to do so much more, and that we weren't doing enough. And we all just stopped for a minute just to witness for each other the toll that it has taken on the people that have come here, but all of these people behind me if they've done this work. Whether they were older adults traveling with their kids, or young families with infants or toddlers, we worked together to meet the need. So thank you to every city agency that's here today. Thank you to every nonprofit partner and organization here with us, and those that couldn't make it, because you always stand up no matter what. You are there in the community working, regardless of whether you're getting paid sometimes, because you're there for the people that come and need your help. You showed up on day one of this storm, and you kept showing up every single day thereafter. You learned how to operationalize your services, how to streamline processes, and how to work together to meet the need.

We know that this is not yet over and this work is still with us, and I want to tell you, it has been an honor to play any type of a role to witness your work, your kind acts, your energy to show that kindness, care, and love are alive in America, and that they live right here in New York City. Every day when I wake up, I remind myself that we do this work in service and in love. So thank you very much, everyone. Want to give yourself a round of applause? (Applause.)

And before I bring the mayor up, I'd like to introduce a family that we have here today. We have Ronald Gemara, and Sophia here with us to tell us a little bit about their story and their journey here to New York City.

**Ronald Gemara:** (Translated from Spanish) First of all, I want to say thank you to the City of New York, to the mayor, to all the organizations, and to (inaudible) for the support that they're providing us at the moment.

I remember when I first arrived at Port Authority at the Terminal Bus, I remember hearing people saying, "Welcome to the City of New York," and clapping, and I can say that I felt free, and I feel free at the moment with my family.

I want to say thank you to all New Yorkers for all of the help, for all of the donations, and even part of that, today I am wearing one of the outfits that were donated, and when I found the suit, I said, "This is the suit that I'm going to be meeting the mayor with." (Laughter.)

And just so you know, I am here today hanging with the mayor of New York.

There were moments when I felt that I didn't make the right decision, but being here today with all of you, I realized that I did make the right decision, especially for my daughter who has autism, and in Venezuela, it was very dangerous for her to be there. And I'm here today, telling everyone that I realize that I did make the right decision to come to New York.

I finalize by saying thank you to the City of New York, to all of the agencies, for all the support that you have brought to me and my family.

**Deputy Mayor Williams-Isom:** So I had a really nice introduction that I was going to give to the Mayor, but what I decided I'll just say is that he's always reminding us to drown out the noise and the things that don't matter. And he's reminding us to do the things that we know, use our skills and be led by our heart. So I appreciate that in you, and I said to you before, leadership really matters, and you really led us in this, and so I'd like to present to everybody Mayor Eric Adams.

**Mayor Eric Adams:** Thank you. And New York City is a feisty place. We have a lot of energy around those things that matter to us, and things that are important. And we learned in this administration that because people critique, they're not critiquing it from a bad place. They're critiquing it from their heart to make sure things are done right.

I just want to take my hat off to our nonprofits. I remember the day that Commissioner Castro and our team met the buses at the Port Authority after they were told in their first steps in America that they were not welcome. I remember the family stepping off the bus and seeing the mayor of the most important city in America, standing there, saying, "You are welcome." No matter how much it was challenging, no matter what we had to go through, we were going to be there for these families. Because we see in our families these families. Not one child slept on the streets of the City of New York because we did not provide them the care that they deserve. Not one child.

Not only did we fulfill our legal responsibility, we fulfilled our moral responsibility. We seamlessly transferred children into schools in the Department of Education. I was so moved by the number of principals that went beyond their academic responsibility to give these young people everything that they needed. We ensured in our welcome centers that we had health services, clothing, diapers, and Pampers, and other hygiene products. We went beyond what was required by law and fulfilled what was required morally to do in this city. And because of that, we set a clear pathway of what is expected on a national level.

Two weeks ago, we spoke to our city and our country. We clearly explained the circumstances we were under, what we had done, what we were doing currently, what we needed help to continue, and what we needed from our national government. And the government, Washington D.C. responded, and now we see a decompression strategy, and we see a method of being as compassionate as we should as a country.

There's a reason that Lady Liberty sits outside of New York City's harbor. This is the place that we ensure we live up to the expectations of what it is to be an American, an American citizen, or a country that welcomes those who are fleeing prosecution and persecution. This family stated their child was in danger in Venezuela. That danger that they face there is something they're not facing here. And as it was shared with me, their beautiful daughter learned English at such an accelerated pace that she's now translating for her mom and dad. If that's not an American story, you tell me what is an American story.

Sophia is going to look back on these days when she grows up. She's going to reflect on these moments. She's going to be standing right at a podium like this, I'm sure, and be like Commissioner Castro, and told as he left Mexico to come here, she's going to look back and think about the compassion that she was shown by this city. All of us may have transitioned out of our positions in government, but this is a moment that we can reflect on. This administration has had to navigate so many crises, from COVID, to monkeypox, to polio, to crime, to housing, to our subway system, but we stayed true to the principles that we believed in. We led with our hearts. We knew what we were obligated to do, and we reached across the partnerships of the people you see behind us.

Our nonprofits played such a crucial role to fill in the gaps where the government just was not able to do. It was those partnerships that Reverend Cabrera and Monroe, getting a countless number of supplies, and materials, and food, and support. Our food pantries, pushed to the maximum, were able to continue to provide food to those New Yorkers who were in need, and our new brothers and sisters who came here. It was a combined effort, and some would emphasize on those small areas that we saw differently. I emphasized on the areas that we were united around. We were united around providing the care that the people who arrived here in this country deserve. And we should be pleased for that. We should be celebrating the spirit of what it is to be a New Yorker. And it's far from over. There are many challenges we're still facing. We're still calling the national government to have a real immigration policy and a bipartisan partnership to accomplish that.

We still believe we need to lean into ensuring that those who are here are allowed to work, and we are thinking creatively that we're starting training right now to make sure that the family members can get the training they need, so even if the six months come about, that they would be ready to go into some form of employment. Ronald is going through a program right now, learning construction, so that he can be employable immediately after the six months are over, or if something happens before that. We have a city where we need so many employees. Why not match these men and women who are willing to work and be part of the American dream to be employed in the city that we are looking forward to new employees?

I'm excited about this moment. I am optimistic about this moment, because of the people who stand behind me, and the people who stand beside me. These are New Yorkers that happen to be in government, but they're New Yorkers. Their stories are real. They know what the dedication and commitment calls for as we deal with these challenges that we are facing.

We wanted to take a moment and pause through this journey to say thank you, a thank you to the people who provided the shelter and care that lived up to what is on our Statue of Liberty. "Give

us your tired, give us those who are fleeing places where persecution exists. This is the home where we embrace them." So again, to all of you, I thank you so much for what you have done, and what you will continue to do. Lift us up in prayer, those of you who are clergy, and let's continue to forge ahead. Thank you very much. Thank you.

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