

Transcript: Mayor Adams Delivers Commencement Address at Pace University

May 16, 2022

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Krislov Krislo, President of Pace University: Now, the 110th mayor of New York City, Eric Adams. Mayor Adams, please come forward so that I may present you as a candidate for the degree of Doctor of Humane Letters.

Krislo: As a kid, Eric Adams watched his single mom clean houses to support her six children. When he was 15 years old, he was arrested and then beaten by officers in the basement of the 103rd precinct. But he remembered the respect afforded to the Black police officer who helped put an end to this assault. Eric Adams realized he could help change the department from within. So he decided to become a cop. He then co-founded the group 100 Blacks in Law Enforcement Who Care, pushing for reform of police culture. He fought crime, and he also fought police misconduct. In 2006, Mayor Adams was elected to the State Senate. In 2013, he was elected the first Black borough president of Brooklyn. And last November, he was elected mayor of New York City.

Krislo: For his tireless commitment to the people of New York, and for his inspiring example of what hard work can accomplish, Pace University is proud today to confer upon the honorable Eric Adams, the Degree of Doctor of Humane Letters, honoris causa, with all the rights and privileges pertaining thereto.

Rob Sands, Chair of Pace's Board of Trustees: As authorized by the Board of Trustees of Pace University, I confer upon you, Mayor Eric Adams, the Degree of Humane Letters, honoris causa, with all the rights and privileges pertaining thereto.

Mayor Adams: In the words of one of the great philosophers of our day, Drake, started from the bottom now I'm here. Listen, I want to really give honor to those who are standing here in peaceful protest, because I know protest. This is a picture of me as the

state senator, protesting on the floor of the state Senate after Trayvon Martin was killed. I wore a hoodie to talk about the loss of this young man.

Mayor Adams: I know protests. In the early '70s, I protested after being arrested and beat by police officers. I know protests. I was there when Clifford Glover, a young 10 year old, was shot and killed. I know protests. In the '70s when Arthur Miller was choke hold to death, I stood there in protest. I protested when Diallo was killed. I protested when Zongo was killed. I protested when Louima was sodomized in the precinct. I know protest. But I'm not getting a degree today because I know how to protest.

Mayor Adams: Let me tell you why I'm getting a degree. I'm getting a degree because after protest, you must do something to protect. You cannot simply protest. You have to protect. So what does that mean? That means that you stand up to the over-proliferation of guns in our country when you see 10 innocent people shot in Buffalo merely because of their ethnicity. It means you stop allowing guns to call highways of death through our community where innocent Black and brown children are losing their lives.

Mayor Adams: And let me tell you about what you do after to protect. You look into the encampments, the tents, that our fellow New Yorkers are living in. Late at night, when I go visit them and see human waste in the tent, drug paraphernalia, innocent people, not receiving the support they deserve. There's nothing dignified by having fellow New Yorkers live on the street in an inhumane way. That is protecting New Yorkers. And I swear to do that. I swear to do that.

Mayor Adams: So here's my message to you graduates. Here's my message. Yes, protest, but then protect. Over 120 different countries are represented here today. You come from 49 different states. You are what America is made of. Yes, I'm not going to get it right. I'm perfectly imperfect, but you know what, if perfection was what it meant to graduate, we would have probably three people in this room. All of us are imperfect. All of us are trying. All of us are forging ahead the America we want.

Mayor Adams: There is no other place better than this country, because you have the right to protest the right. There's no German dream. There's no French dream. There's no Polish dream, but there's an American dream. And so when you leave here today, you leave here with that dream and you can go from being a dishwasher to owning the restaurants. You can go from being a person who is dyslexic and become the mayor. As

long as you dream, as long as you fight for what you think is right, this country will become the country we want it to be. And in the process, there's going to be a lot of people who will hate you. All I can say, have your haters become your waiters when you sit down at the table of success. Thank you.

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