

Transcript: Mayor Eric Adams Appears on MSNBC's "The Sunday Show With Jonathan Capehart"

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Jonathan Capehart: Frank R. James was arrested Wednesday and faces a federal terrorism charge after allegedly shooting 10 people and injuring 13 on a Brooklyn subway a day earlier. The attack comes as NYPD statistics show a 60% increase in overall crime in New York City compared to this time last year. And it highlights the challenge faced by the man who declared public safety his number one priority. That man joins me now. The 110th mayor of the city of New York, Eric Adams. Mr. Mayor, welcome back to The Sunday Show.

Mayor Eric Adams: Thank you very much. It's good to be on with you.

Capehart: After last week's subway shooting, how are you addressing the city's rising crime, especially regarding public transportation safety, which according to NYC crime statistics, crime on New York City transit is up 73%.

Mayor Adams: And it is crucial because as you know, the transit system is the lifeblood of our city. And we have put in place what I believe are the foundational parts of having a real public safety plan and apparatus, everything from deploying police correctly, to dealing with the mental health and homelessness crises on our system, to ensuring that officers are receiving specific information on what we expect from them. And that's really how important the omnipresence, making sure passengers are seeing those offices and going after those violent offenders. But it's a combination. I cannot say it enough. There are many rivers that feed this sea of violence. You see this violence taking place all over our country. It's not a red state, a blue state conversation. When you look at Tulsa, Tulsa has three times as much homicide as Los Angeles and the largest places where you are seeing this gun violence are in our red states as well. So we must have a national and local approach to this.

Capehart: Mr. Mayor, one of the things that unnerved New Yorkers, and as a former New Yorker, what happened in the subway system earlier this week is like one of the biggest nightmares of New York City residents, particularly those who rely on the subway and that is shootings on the subways. What do you say to New Yorkers who feel like the city, even though it has a new mayor and a new mayor who has made public safety his number one priority, that the city is spiraling out of control?

Mayor Adams: No, the city's far from that. I was in the city when it spiraled out of control. During the mid 80s, early 90s, we were part of the real comeback when it dealt with crime in this city. That is not what we're facing at this time. And again, I cannot point enough to the NYPD's doing its job. Think about this for a moment. We took 1,800 guns off the streets since I have been the mayor. 4,000 of felony arrests, major felony arrests, 4,000. We have a criminal justice system that's clogged. Many of these people we arrested are back on the streets because the courts are not open. We have laws that unfortunately are not zeroing in on those who are violent offenders.

Mayor Adams: So the NYPD's doing its job, New Yorkers are doing their job. As we saw, we all came together to apprehend this dangerous person. And then we have to focus on a mental health issue that has been basically neglected for far too long. This city is far from spiraling out of control, and we are going to get crime under control and also deal with those pathways that feed the criminal behavior in our city.

Capehart: Well, let's talk more about mental health. How do you address the mental health issues that are plaguing many New Yorkers, particularly those who are homeless?

Mayor Adams: It's a combination. We can't just prophesize about it, like some like to do, but we have to have actual plans. Number one, we need the funding from the state to open mental health beds. I rallied with NYSNA, the nurses' association during the height of the COVID to talk about the closing of mental health beds. They were used for the emergency COVID medical needs, but now we need to get more beds online. Number two, we have to abandon the belief that it is dignified to allow people to live on streets in encampments, tents, cardboard boxes, no access to mental health services, drug paraphernalia, human waste inside these tents. This is unacceptable in our city and we're not going to allow it to happen, but we have to match it with treatment beds, safe haven beds, wraparound services. That is what we're doing. We're going to face

this crisis head on and not attempt to ignore it, like it has been ignored for far too many years.

Capehart: Mayor Adams, how is Governor Hochul as a partner in your effort to address public safety, mental health, and crime in the city?

Mayor Adams: I cannot thank her enough. When I went to Albany to try to push through some reasonable tweaks to the criminal justice package, which was a worthy cause to put in place, real criminal justice reform, because far too many people had draconian methods used against us. She understood it. And what was considered as something that could not be accomplished, we were able to accomplish. We were able to make some good moves in the right direction. I think there's more to do. She has been of great assistance around looking at the, actually the laws around how do we deal with people with mental health issues. And so she has been a partner in this area and we're going to continue to partner with her as we deal with these real issues that the city is facing, COVID, crime, our economy. You need a partner in Albany to accomplish this.

Capehart: Mr. Mayor, last question for you and that is this. You are walking a fine line with, between protecting public safety and protecting civil liberties. Are you going to be able to keep your promise that in your effort to bring crime down and address the plague of gun violence in this city, that New Yorkers' civil liberties, particularly the civil liberties of African Americans will be protected?

Mayor Adams: Well, that's what I cut my teeth in. I cut my teeth in fighting on behalf of over aggressive, abusive policing. And we're not going to abandon that. You don't do that for 35 plus years and then move away from it when you become the mayor of the city of New York and you're responsible for that police department. We could have the justice we deserve and the safety we need. What we're facing in our city and cities across America, that there's so much emphasis on those who are breaking the laws. I say, we need to start also focusing on those who are doing the right thing, who are the victims of lawbreakers. Let's start focusing on those innocent people who are being victimized by a small number of violent people as we get them the help that they need. We need to protect everyday New Yorkers and everyday Americans.

Capehart: Eric Adams, the 110th mayor of the Big Apple. Thank you very much for coming back to The Sunday Show.

Mayor Adams: Thank you.

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