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TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR ERIC ADAMS APPEARS ON NY1'S IN FOCUS

Cheryl Wills: Now, our first guest has been on In Focus many times, but this is his first appearance as mayor. We are so thrilled to welcome Mayor Adams to our special hour-long edition of In Focus in honor of our 30th anniversary. Mr. Mayor, good to see you again.

Mayor Eric Adams: Great seeing you, Cheryl. Sometimes people don't realize how long we've been doing this. I think I've been in front of the mic with you for many years.

Wills: I think, almost 30 years, to tell you the truth.

Mayor Adams: Yes. Isn't that something?

Wills: Yeah. Absolutely. You're part of our 30-year archive, literally from '92. So let's talk about when NY1 first went on the air. Your mentor, David Dinkins, made history as the first Black mayor. Now, here we are 30 years later, and you are the second. So talk to us about how Dinkins inspires you.

Mayor Adams: It sends chills down my spine when I think about it. Go back and look at the picture when he took his acceptance speech after winning the primary. And if you look close, you'll see this guy named Eric Adams standing there, on that moment, on that stage, during the primary. All of us were there, so many faces. You think about it, and it was just a level of excitement. He was a mentor. He was a friend, not only for me but also for my son. And it was Bill Lynch, his deputy mayor, who actually planted the seed when I spoke with him over 28 years ago about my thoughts of running for mayor. It was Bill Lynch who gave me my roadmap on how to do it.

Wills: Amazing. So let's stay in the '90s when you were a police officer and the state of New York City. You saw it up close because you had boots on the ground as a member of New York's Finest, more than 2,000 murders a year. Take us back to that time when you were on the beat.

Mayor Adams: A different city. And you're right. We surrendered. We threw up our hands, and we normalized violence. David Dinkins, Mayor Dinkins, was a visionary. He did the whole Safe Street streets initiative and went to Albany to get an increase in the number of police officers.

The economy started to turn around under his last few years. Safety numbers were starting to turn around. The next generation of policing they really benefited from when he planted the seeds. He never really got the credit for what he was starting to accomplish in the city during those difficult years. Giuliani received the credit for it, but it was David Dinkins that led and put in place the platform. But it was a different frightening place. Graffiti was everywhere in our subway system. People were afraid to ride the trains. Crack cocaine really engulfed our entire city. It was really alarming when you think about it and when he was actually the mayor and navigated us through those difficult times.

Wills: Yeah, he certainly did, and we were happy to have him on In Focus to share his accomplishments. We miss him so much. Don't we? Let's fast forward to 2001, the city's darkest day when we lost our Twin Towers and nearly 3,000 people on that horrible day. This city, Mr. Mayor, has never been the same since the war on terror. Talk to us about how that day changed New York City.

Mayor Adams: So significant. I recall we were campaigning early that day because, remember, it was Election Day and we were campaigning early. As soon as I saw the first plane strike, the first thing that went through my mind was terrorism. And I remember walking from uptown. I was campaigning, helping Norman Siegel at the time. I remember walking downtown. But it was later that night when I had to go in because all police officers knew we had to be mobilized to our commands.

I remember that night being down at Ground Zero, watching the ground smolder, watching the cover of dust, seeing the military personnel, firefighters, other civil service all there. There was this feeling that we were not going to make it. It was just such a major impact because as a police officer, a transit police officer, it was down at the Trade Center District Two where I did my early years of policing. So I knew how large those towers were and how they were a symbol of our city.

But you know what really reminds me every year is not so much that we acknowledge the individuals we lost, but Cheryl, it's September 12th. We got up. Teachers taught, builders built, retailers sold goods. When we got up, the country got up. And it's a symbol of our resiliency and who we are as not only New Yorkers, but as Americans, and that's why we're here today.

Wills: That's exactly why we're here today. Mayor Adams, stay with us. We're going to take a quick break. We want to talk to you about a few more things. In Focus continues right after this.

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Wills: We're back with Mayor Adams, and he is our first guest for this special hour-long 30th anniversary program. Mayor, I want to talk to you about something you've seen up close your entire career, and that's race relations. Central Park Five, Crown Heights riots, Yusef Hawkins, Abner Louima, so many painful moments in this city's history. Talk to us about how this city has struggled to heal after these devastating events.

Mayor Adams: So true. And when Abner Louima endorsed me for mayor, it really symbolized how both parts of this city I played a role in. Number one, I always believed that we need to have the right reform, the right justice. And I pushed for that as a state senator as well as fighting against the abuse of stop-and-frisk, fighting against what happened to Abner Louima, Dorismond, and other notable individuals who are the victims of aggressive policing. But also, I was a very clear messenger of public safety. As I state it now as mayor, I support law enforcement. We can have justice and safety. They can coexist. And oftentimes when you look at some of the racial tensions, it was in surrounding how we police this city, and far too often, we did it in an unfair way.

Wills: We're coming up on the 10th anniversary of Hurricane Sandy. And 30 years ago, mayor, not many New Yorkers were talking about a climate emergency or a climate crisis. Now, here it is in our face. Talk to us about how this city has struggled with adjusting to a green economy.

Mayor Adams: Well, part of the problem was that many people did not believe 30 years ago that this issue of climate change was real. It took several climate, really, crises before we understood that it's time to stop being abusive to Mother Nature and that this is the only planet we have. I like to say we have two mothers, one gave birth to us and the other sustains us. And we were not treating the fact that Mother Nature played a role.

And so it's time for us to point towards more than just building walls around coastal cities. We need to have a real focus on how do we introduce real change in how we live every day? And while we're doing that, we have to be inclusive. Such as a green economy and ensuring that our young people are ready to be employable in the green market. Right here in Sunset Park at the Marine Terminal here in Brooklyn, we're going to have one of the largest wind ports where we're going to be employing... Almost a thousand jobs are going to be available. You don't need a college degree for these jobs. Everything from battery storage to EV vehicles. We must employ New Yorkers and at the same time deal with the real climate crisis that we are facing.

Wills: And Mr. Mayor, before you go, like I said, you are in our 30-year archive right from the start. What would you like to say about New York 1 as we reach this 30-year milestone?

Mayor Adams: I know New York 1 hates to admit it, but I'm mayor because of New York 1. When other stations refused to cover me, thought that my message was not significant with 100 Blacks in Law Enforcement Who Care. Even as a state senator, as borough president, there were days when the only camera was out there was New York 1. And so as you reach 30, it equals my 30 plus years of activism of fighting on behalf of New Yorkers. I think that if you look through your archives, I guarantee you, I come up more than any other New Yorker. And so I say thank you, New York 1. You're numero uno in my book.

Wills: Okay. And we appreciate you and good luck in everything you do. Appreciate you spending time with us on this Sunday.

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