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TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR ERIC ADAMS APPEARS LIVE ON CNN'S "CNN THIS MORNING"

Don Lemon: So protestors taking to the streets over the weekend to decry police brutality after the releases — the release, I should say, of Tyre Nichols police beating video. In New York City's Times Square three demonstrators were arrested. One of them you can see right here, jumping on the hood of a police vehicle breaking the windshield. The city's mayor, Eric Adams, has spoken openly about being beaten by police as a teenager. Adams tweeting about the video of Tyre Nichols as someone who spent decades fighting for police diversity and against police abuse. He said, "I feel betrayed." So the mayor, Eric Adams, joins me now. He spent more than 20 years in the NYPD and was a co-founder of an advocacy group that speaks out against police brutality. Mayor, good morning to you. Thank you for appearing. You're the perfect person to talk about these issues. So my first question, how did things go so horribly wrong in Memphis?

Mayor Eric Adams: I think a number of things went wrong. It was clear that no one was there with a level-head and really controlled the situation and the scene. And we know policing is a very high anxiety form of public protection, but those officers lost control and they show the level of abuse that is really betrayal to those who wear the uniform every day and serve the job of public protection.

Lemon: Much has been made about the officers, all of them being Black. You've said that diversifying police departments would allow us, and this is a quote, "Allow us to have the level of policing we all deserve." These five officers, all Black, is there an entrenched police culture of aggression towards Black people?

Mayor Adams: Well, clearly we could not ignore the ethnicity of the officers that are involved. That is the pink elephant in the room. And people talked about that. And when we want to diversify departments, it's not only African American. We have increased the number of members from the AAPI community, Spanish speaking officers, Muslim officers. The role was to ensure that you diversify departments, so the officers are coming from the communities that they represented and that grew up in those communities. Those officers, I believe, betrayed that when all of us attempted to diversify departments. But we're going to stay focused. We're going to keep moving forward. Diversity still is the key. We saw that in here in New York City and we

are going to stay on that road, but there was a personal feeling of betrayal when I witnessed that video.

Lemon: Okay. Well let me ask you, the chief, CJ Davis, in my interview with her, she said that all the officers being Black, it takes race off the table. Do you agree with that?

Mayor Adams: No. No, I don't. I think that I understand what the chief was saying and I think she really handled this situation in a very professional way. She moved swiftly. She assured that those officers were removed from the department. She took all the necessary steps, but I think race is still on the table of when a culture of policing historically has treated those from different groups differently, even when the individuals are from that same group, that culture can still exist and we have to zero in on it, being honest about it and making sure that we properly train police for the realities of the cities that they are policing in.

Lemon: I want to talk about the Scorpion unit, which was hers under ... in 2021. She established the Scorpion unit. Memphis Police is now saying they're going to disband that unit tied to the Scorpion unit, tied to the beating. Do you think that was the right call because that's just one of the units with one of the names. The same officers are still in the police department. The same mentality runs through the police department. Do you think that was the right move and is that enough?

Mayor Adams: I would never second guess a person who's on the ground, she's closest to the problem so she's closer to the solution. Units don't create abuse. Abusive behavior creates abuse. You can be assigned to uniform patrol — if you don't have the right mindset for public protection, and I think the nobility of being a law enforcement officer, then you should not be assigned in the police department. When I put back in place our anti-gun unit, many people stated that we should not do it, but we were able to remove 7,000 guns off our streets. That's a 27-year-high, and when you look at the number of arrests for those who carry guns, we must have proper training, proper mindset, and the police officers across our country must have the right mindset to do this very difficult and challenging job of public protection.

Lemon: I want to follow up on what's happening with the NYPD, but let me just get this in, and this is from the family because Tyre Nichols' family had asked that the Scorpion unit disband. The attorneys for the family praised the decision to deactivate that unit saying that they hope other cities take action to get rid of units just like it. Since selected, you have revived a controversial anti-crime NYPD unit that was responsible for the chokehold death of Eric Garner. How do you respond to the Nichols family?

Mayor Adams: First of all, I understand their feeling and emotion. I remember when the first time I shared with my mom that I was assaulted by police officers, how devastating it was for her. And it was years later, but she understood what it was. And so I understand when those who are the victims of the abusive police behavior respond a certain way. But we have an obligation of using all the tools properly to keep citizens safe. And right here in New York City we did not reinstate the anti-crime unit. That was a plain clothes unit in plain clothes of vehicles forming what I thought was aggressive policing at the time. What we put back in place based on hearing from the public — officers wearing a modified uniform so they could be properly identified,

proper training, and make sure the officers who are assigned were handpicked and understood how to interact with the public and keep your body cameras on. It was the body cameras and the camera from the pole that allowed us to get the transparency that we needed so we could properly make the right decisions.

Lemon: So I think it's fair to say that you updated that unit and you think from what you're saying, keeping the body cameras on and so forth, that that is how you are going to reassure New Yorkers that these units are safe.

Mayor Adams: A combination, the body camera footage is crucial. Having the right supervision there that can immediately deescalate a situation or stop when it gets out of hand and pick the right officers to assign. Just because you are a police officer does not mean that you are capable of doing every aspect of policing. If you are a doctor, does not mean you could be a brain surgeon. No, a brain surgeon is a brain surgeon. And so the forms of policing that causes you to go in and deal with a high volume of arrest, go after those who carry guns and other dangerous actions, that's a special trained police officer. If they are in a modified uniform, how do you respond? And we have to continue to lift up the standards of policing no matter who wears the uniform.

Lemon: Let's move on and talk about the migrant crisis because you've been speaking out a lot about that crisis. You say it is a national crisis. You also said that New York City is full. Is that really true? Is the Biden administration helping you out at all?

Mayor Adams: Well, I think we must do more. And I take my hat off to the New York congressional delegation including Senator Schumer and Congressman Jeffries. They were able to pass a bipartisan bill with the over \$800 million that is going to be dispersed to those cities that are involved. We received \$8 million from FEMA. But when you look at the price tag, it's going to continue to go up, but we have to go to the source. The source is real comprehensive immigration reform. The Republicans have been hiding, holding on and blocking it for too many years.

We must get this resolved, but there's a crisis right now, and that crisis should be coordinated by the national government. We need to expedite the right to work because it's just unfair to cities like El Paso, New York, Chicago, Washington, for us to pick up this burden. And then we need one individual who solely is playing a role of a decompression strategy so that the end of the road can't be New York City and other big cities. So we need more help from the national government. We are speaking with our partners in the state to get this real crisis under control.

Lemon: Part of my question was, is the Biden Administration helping you out? Are you speaking directly to the Biden Administration in your last answer?

Mayor Adams: Yes, we were. We are speaking directly to the Biden administration. And yes, when it comes down to the coordination, when it comes down to the decompression strategy, when it comes down to making sure we find ways to allow people to work so they don't have to only sit around all day — yes, I'm speaking directly to the administration. This is a problem that

we must have a resolution, both from Congress and immigration, but the administration to deal with the immediate need that we have.

Lemon: Two quick questions that New Yorkers are... This is New York centric, New York focused. Just before the new year, you created a rat czar position to deal with the city's rodent issues. That is when I ask people, "What should I ask the mayor?" New Yorkers, they said, "Rats." So go. What does this mean? Are you going to get rid of them or reduce the number of rats?

Mayor Adams: Well, I don't know if many people may not know it, but I hate rats and rats are going to hate me before it's over. Rats are an indicator that your city is not clean, it's not healthy. And when I zero in on rats, I'm zeroing in on something that is really a reflection—you start your day, you don't want a rat running across your foot, you don't want them inside your car. So there's something that all New Yorkers, if not all Americans, can clearly see a symbol. And so our goal is number one, to hire a rat czar that is going to focus on rats and hate them as much as I do, but also to use new innovation and devices that we are testing right now to go after the problem.

Lemon: Okay. Can you imagine, "My title, I'm the rat czar." Okay, so listen, I don't know if you can see this, and I don't know if you've had a chance to read the Post this morning, but so many people are complaining. The Eagles, the New York, whatever, we don't like Philadelphia, our teams, bird brains, people were upset because the Empire State Building lit up in the Eagles colors. Mayor, what were you guys thinking?

Mayor Adams: No, listen, that got away from us. The way the Eagles game got away from us with the Giants, we should have lit up in real symbolism the colors of the giant. That blue should have been there. Unfortunately, someone did not get the memo at the Empire State Building, but we want to see good sportsmanship. The Giants will be back next year and the Jets will be back. We'll be excited when they rebuild their teams.

Lemon: We got it all in from D.C. to what's happening with migrants, to —

Poppy Harlow: Bird brains.

Lemon: ... Rats, to bird brains. Mayor —

Harlow: Can I just thank him? My husband has a thing with the rats.

Lemon: Yeah.

Harlow: You two should...

Lemon: That's what my fiancé said.

Harlow: Patrol Brooklyn for the rats together. He's going to be so happy you asked that question.

Lemon: Well, Tim said... I said, "Tim, what should I ask the mayor?" He goes, "Ask him about the rats."

Harlow: Oh my gosh.

Kaitlan Collins: That's a real problem. Eric Adams, I know you love Jalen Hurts because you got those Alabama roots, so that's why the Empire State was for the Eagles last night.

Lemon: Oh, she's saying you are behind it, mayor. We've uncovered it, mayor.

Mayor Adams: Thank you.

Lemon: It's always a pleasure. Thank you. Please come back. We love having you. Thank you.

Mayor Adams: Thank you. Take care.

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