

Transcript: Mayor Eric Adams, NYPD Commissioner Keechant Sewell Hold Ceremony Honoring Two Police Officers

May 27, 2022

Ingrid Lewis-Martin, Chief Advisor to the Mayor: Good morning and welcome to City Hall. Today is a wonderful day where we get to honor real life heroes, everyday heroes, that are part of New York's finest. I am Chief Advisor to Mayor Eric Adams, and without any further ado, it's indeed a privilege—

[Crosstalk]

Lewis-Martin: It's indeed a privilege and an honor for me to present to you our 110th mayor of New York City and a former member for 22 years of NYPD as a captain, our Mayor Eric Adams.

Mayor Eric Adams: And a transit officer, so I know how dangerous the tracks are, and if you did not see the video, really encourage everyone to see the video. Just the quick thinking that is about when you're dealing with the train, you're dealing with the third rail, you're dealing with all the uncertainties when it's time to deal with an emergency that's on the tracks. And that's why we're here today, to just really acknowledge the bravery of two of our NYPD's officers who stepped in and saved the life of a New Yorker.

Mayor Adams: And that's what we want to be clear on. They saw a state of danger and urgency last Wednesday at around 2:00 PM in the afternoon. Suleiman Rifai, who is visually impaired, fell face down on a subway track at the Pitkin and Grant Avenue station in Brooklyn. And the video was chilling because, while they were taking their actions, you saw the train entering the station. This is why the police commissioner and I are talking about retraining all of our officers on how do you patrol the subway system. It's a unique way to patrol the subway system, knowing how, when trains come in the station, the dangers of the third rail, the dangers of track movement. This is something

that I learned as a transit officer. We want to re-incorporate that as we infuse the street patrols with the inspections in our subway system, which we have carried out thousands upon thousands of inspections.

Mayor Adams: Detective Henry Greco and Officer Jason Micaeluso, right? Macaluso. Macaluso. Macaluso. Rushed to the scene when Mr. Suleiman fell to the track. With the flashlight, used the flashlight to stop the train conductor, to get the train conductor's attention to slow the train down as they assisted in removing and helping Mr. Suleiman from being on the track area and saving his life in the process. This is just real heroic action, and the timeliness of the action.

Mayor Adams: When you look at the video, you see the coordination, the timeliness, the focus, the communication that is needed. Both of these officers showed the real... Again and again, I talk about it, the importance of our police officers not only going after gun violence, but just going after making sure – correcting conditions, ensuring that passengers are safe, no matter what the conditions are.

Mayor Adams: These officers carried out and went beyond the call of duty. They both showed the entire city, if not to the globe, what it is we do every day, those men and women who are your police officers protecting the people of this city. And you see some of the horrific incidents that we are correcting on the subway system, but we also should acknowledge some of the heroic actions that our men and women who patrol the streets in our subway system carry out every day.

Mayor Adams: And this is what we need right now, a community and police being there for each other. For each other. So on behalf of 8.8 million New Yorkers, the police commissioner and I want to just say thank you. I know you have your family here with you, and we just really appreciate your course of actions, your quick thinking, and executing a well thought out way of protecting a citizen of this city. Thank you very much.

Lewis-Martin: Without any further ado, it is indeed an honor and privilege for me to introduce to some of you, and present to most of you, our Police Commissioner Keechant Sewell.

Police Commissioner Keechant Sewell, Police Department: Thank you. Thank you, Mayor Adams, and good morning, everyone, for being here. I am proud to be here

today as we honor the exceptional work of two NYPD officers. But yet if you ask Detective Greco and Officer Macaluso, they'll tell you they were just doing their job. And they'd be right, but that doesn't mean that they shouldn't be honored for a very well done job.

Commissioner Sewell: Without repeating what the mayor has described as truly exceptional actions, I will say that it bears repeating. When they saw a person in danger, they reacted immediately. With a man on the tracks, and a bright light, and a gust of wind coming into the station, New Yorkers know what that means. Every second matters. So with literally no time to waste, these partners went to work. Running over to the track bed, they talked to the injured man, brought him to the platform, alerted the coming train to this person in danger on the tracks, and pulled him to safety. All of this, a life saved in 20 seconds.

Commissioner Sewell: The people of this city can't possibly know everything the NYPD does to keep them safe. This is who NYPD is. This is who our officers are every single day. Unquestionably, the best in the world.

Commissioner Sewell: So on behalf of the entire NYPD and the people of the City of New York, thank you, Detective Henry Greco and Police Officer Jason Macaluso. Because of you, there is a grateful man and his family standing here today. Our Police Department and our city is truly proud to count you as our finest. Thank you for your service.

Lewis-Martin: Without any further ado, it's indeed an honor and a privilege, and I'll use the term that my Muslim brother, Altai, who works for our office has taught me, [speaks in foreign language], "Because of God's will." For me to introduce to you the gentleman who was saved by our heroic and brave officers, Mr. Suleiman Rifai.

Suleiman Rifai: Good morning, everyone.

Mayor Adams: Good morning.

Rifai: What I can say is my deepest thanks for the officers. You were my angels that day sent to you to rescue me in the right time. And if you were not there that moment, I would not be here today. And I'm so happy and so grateful to be here. And thank you. I

appreciate you very much. Thank you. Mayor Adams also for having the police officers in the subway train. Thank you.

Mayor Adams: Thank you. Thank you.

Rifai: Thank you.

Lewis-Martin: We are also honored to have with us a member of Mr. Rifai's family, who happens to also be a state senator, Mr. Robert Jackson. Please come and say a few words.

New York State Senator Robert Jackson: So good morning, everyone.

Mayor Adams: Good morning.

Senator Jackson: First, let me thank the officers, Detective Greco and Officer Macaluso. You are a godsend. As Suleiman has said, but not for you, only God knows what would've occurred. And so Suleiman is my brother-in-law. My wife would love to be here, but she's up in Connecticut dealing with her sister.

Senator Jackson: And I say to you that Suleiman, he said he's walked and rode the trains for 17 years. He's a licensed social worker in Brooklyn. And the bottom line is that he misstepped, but he's back on track now, and he's ready to go back to work. And I believe one of the chiefs of your department, Commissioner, spoke at the MTA hearing, and he said besides this, what they've done, that they are integrally involved in the community with food banks and other things for all of the people. And there seem to be exceptional representatives of the NYPD.

Senator Jackson: So I'm so happy that my brother-in-law is alive. And I say to you, Mayor Adams, that the assignment of police officers to the transit system, people of New York have said that, and you've done that. But I know that we cannot have a police officer on every train or every platform. We do the best we can. So I thank you for doing that, and as a result of that, my brother-in-law is alive. Let me thank you.

Lewis-Martin: And our last speaker, but definitely not our least speaker, is our new president of the MTA, Mr. Richard Davey.

Richard Davey, President of New York City Transit, Metropolitan Transportation Authority: And she just met me. Can you imagine? That was a very kind introduction.

Davey: Well, first, on behalf of Governor Hochul and Chair Janno Lieber, I want to bring tidings and thanks to the officers we've had a chance to chat and meet with and your families. Mr. Rifai, we are delighted that you are well. We're also delighted that not only you're a user of the subway system, but as your brother-in-law said, you're ready to come back. So we welcome you back. We would like the ridership, but thank you for being a customer.

Davey: I've been on the job a month, and I have not had the chance to personally and publicly thank Mayor Adams, Commissioner Sewell for all they're doing to help us at MTA. Their commitment, their action to bring more officers into our subway system to protect our customers, continue to make arrests. We are just so appreciative of the continued commitment, cooperation, and collaboration that we're working with the city.

Davey: So I want to thank you publicly and personally for all that, all that you're doing. And, again, congratulations to the officers. A well deserved weekend coming up. So with that, I will step away. Thank you very much.

Lewis-Martin: So, again, we are here to honor two of New York's finest, so it's a great day. I ask our officers to please step forward. Police Officer Jason Macaluso. Did I say it properly? Macaluso. And Detective Henry Greco. Please come forward so that Mayor Adams and the police commissioner may present you with your proclamations. And Mr. Rifai, yes, would you like to join them please?

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Lewis-Martin: So, again, we thank our officers for a job well done. We thank our mayor and our police commissioner for ensuring that our transit system is back up to snuff with our great officers doing what they do best. We thank you.

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