

# Transcript: Mayor Eric Adams Appears on CBS' "60 Minutes"

April 24, 2022

**Anderson Cooper:** Has there ever been a mayor who was in a gang, grew up as you did, got beaten by police, and then joined the police force?

**Mayor Eric Adams:** There's a subtext to the election, you know? I'm hoping the young man that is sitting in Riker's Island— because he's dyslexic and did not get the tools he deserved realizes that, "Hey, Eric Adams was dyslexic." "Eric Adams sat in a cell." I'm hoping those who are on the verge of homeless or homeless will say, "Dammit, Eric was on the verge." You know, there's a great moment here. A bend in the road is not the end of the road, just make the turn.

**Cooper:** Is the subway shooting an indication that this city is in real trouble in terms of crime?

**Mayor Adams:** No. I don't believe so. When that shooting happened on Tuesday, Wednesday people were back on the train.

**Cooper:** What do you say to New Yorkers who are— are scared and feel that the city is headed in the wrong direction in terms of crime?

**Mayor Adams:** We've moved 1,800 guns off the streets of our city since I've been elected. 1,800. And so we're putting in place the foundation of dealing with the immediate needs of violence, but we're also stopping the pipeline that causes children to get involved in violence.

**Mayor Adams:** We were so far in the wrong direction of, really, abusive policing in our city and country that people got so fed up that they turned the ship too far in the wrong direction. There is-

**Anderson Cooper:** Too far to the left, you're saying?

**Mayor Adams:** To the left. There is a middle ground. We only talk about, "How do we protect the rights of those who commit a crime?" How about start talking about, "How do we protect the rights of people who are doing the right thing?"

**Cooper:** There's probably a lot of liberals who are concerned you're a Republican.

**Mayor Adams:** Listen, there are 8.8 million people in this city, 30 million opinions, but there's one mayor that's going to make the decisions.

**Cooper:** You've talked about swagger. Walking down the street with you, I— you have swagger, certainly.

[Laughter]

**Cooper:** And you've said that when— the mayor has swagger, the city has swagger.

**Mayor Adams:** That's right.

[Laughter]

**Mayor Adams:** I love that skit, by the way.

**Cooper:** So what is swagger?

**Mayor Adams:** It's, you know, feeling as though you've overcome so much that you can overcome whatever is in front of you.

**Mayor Adams:** She used to give us, Anderson, a garbage bag full of clothing every day because she thought the marshals was going to throw us out. My siblings and I, they used to call us the garbage bag children. I can still remember having this feeling in my stomach, you know, "Darn it, don't let the marshals be out there." We'd get embarrassed.

**Cooper:** You had joined a gang when you were 14. Is that—is that right?

**Mayor Adams:** Fourteen when I joined But I was a well-known number runner at 12.

**Cooper:** You were running numbers at 12 years old-

**Mayor Adams:** Yeah, that was the illegal gambling system.

**Mayor Adams:** They just continually— they kicked us, kicked us in the groin over and over again. Every time I would see a police car I relived the beating. Every time I heard a siren.

**Cooper:** How did somebody who had that experience with police decide to join the police force?

**Mayor Adams:** The Reverend Herbert Daughtry and a group of the civil rights leaders brought 13 young men to the House of the Lord Church and stated that it was time for us to go into the police department and fight for reform inside.

**Cooper:** What did you think when they said to you that you should join the police force?

**Mayor Adams:** I th— thought they were outta their minds.

[Laughter]

**Cooper:** You said a while back that you were the new face of the Democratic Party. Where are you on the political spectrum?

**Mayor Adams:** I am a simple, pragmatic Democrat.

**Cooper:** What was your thinking then?

**Mayor Adams:** It was clear—no, my—mother say, "Boy, what's wrong with you?"

[Laughter]

**Cooper:** Did she say that to you?

[Laughter]

**Mayor Adams:** She did. I was a police officer, and I saw the violence, and I wasn't seeing any help on the federal level. It was a protest vote.

**Cooper:** Did you vote for Rudy Giuliani?

**Mayor Adams:** No, I did not.

**Mayor Adams:** Democrats don't like talking about intervention. But we have to lean into the discomfort of the immediate things we must do. Because you can't say Black lives matter when a police officer shoots a young person, but does that Black lives matter when a 12-year-old baby was shot?

**Cooper:** You say the Democrats don't like to talk about that. Why is that?

**Mayor Adams:** Because when you talk about intervention, you have to use the term of giving police officers the tools to deal with violence right now.

**Cooper:** That makes a lot of very liberal Democrats a little worried—

**Mayor Adams:** Yes, it does.

**Cooper:** Because that's Rudy Giuliani language.

**Mayor Adams:** They have allowed Rudy Giuliani to hijack something that the overwhelming number of people of color want. They will tell you, "We want our police. We don't want our police to be abusive." And that is the balance that I know we can do in this— in this city.

**Cooper:** You get around.

**Mayor Adams:** I love the city. And I— love my job.

**Cooper:** you are an interesting New York character, don't you think?

**Mayor Adams:** No, just the opposite, I personify the energy of New York. Our leaders have not always done so.

**Cooper:** A federal judge has ruled that Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, they can't require masks on airplanes and other transport. You think [it's] a mistake to not require masks on planes, on trains, and in high traffic areas?

**Mayor Adams:** Yes. I think it's a huge mistake not to require. We're still requiring it in our subway system and on our buses.

**Cooper:** Is that the kind of person you really want to have in your inner circle?

**Mayor Adams:** We're in a city of perfectly imperfect people. During a time that we have a law enforcement crisis, Phil brings a lot to the table.

**Cooper:** There was testimony that he let a businessman pay for his vacation travel and expenses. You said you're not going to tolerate wrongdoing by your officers. Are the things he did okay?

**Mayor Adams:** Listen, he could have made better decisions of who was around him. What I do know is that we're going to have a very transparent government here in city hall. Transparency is the best way to make sure those who are hired are doing their jobs.

**Cooper:** I just want to try a quick, like, speed round just asking you what words come up when I talk about some former mayors. David Dinkins.

**Mayor Adams:** Compassionate, caring, kind.

**Cooper:** Michael Bloomberg.

**Mayor Adams:** Thoughtful, kind, loved the city.

**Cooper:** Ed Koch.

**Mayor Adams:** Eric Adams. Many personalities. Real life.

[Laughter]

**Cooper:** Really? You see a similarity with Ed Koch a little bit?

**Mayor Adams:** Yes. Thick skin.

**Cooper:** Ed Koch used to go around asking-

**Both:** "How am I doing?"

[Laughter]

**Cooper:** What do you say?

[Laughter]

**Mayor Adams:** I just give a thumbs up. If they give me a thumbs up, I know I'm doing the right thing.

[Laughter]

**Cooper:** Okay.

[Laughter]

**Mayor Adams:** If they use one of the other four fingers, then I got a problem.

###