

THE CITY OF NEW YORK
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NEW YORK, NY 10007

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: January 27, 2023, 7:09 PM

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TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR ERIC ADAMS APPEARS LIVE ON NY1'S "INSIDE CITY HALL"

Errol Louis: Welcome back to Inside City Hall. As I mentioned at the top of the show, New Yorkers are gathering to protest the death of Tyre Nichols who was killed by Memphis police officers during a traffic stop earlier this month. Mayor Adams has been urging peaceful protests as officials released video of that fatal beating. I spoke with the mayor earlier this evening and that's where we begin our conversation. Here's part one of the talk.

Thank you for joining us, Mr. Mayor. We've got protests happening as you and I are speaking right now. I wanted to, I guess, check in and see what is your message to New Yorkers tonight who are going to be angry and/or afraid?

Mayor Eric Adams: It's enough to be angry about. I think about Noah and Jordan, and as two men that are raising Black boys, this touches us in a very significant way. And as a young man who was abused by police officers at the age of 15, I know what this feels like and our heart goes out to Tyre's family and the people of Memphis. As we deal with this and we think about how do we sit down at the kitchen table and our schools, how do we engage in the conversation to move towards what we all want in our city and country?

Louis: Does the NYPD have any specific knowledge of possible disorder here in the city?

Mayor Adams: We receive intel on some of the issues from our colleagues across the country. It's a sensitive conversation because some of it's some classified data. But as New Yorkers, we should know that in many cases people come from outside the city and they attempt to disrupt the righteous call for reforms, the righteous call for peaceful demonstration. And we always, always must be vigilant to not allow the outside agitators to really disrupt what we are doing in this city.

Louis: Okay. We know there have been other times when New York, even in the middle of national demonstrations, sort of sees our way through without a lot of disorder or violence. We'll hope that that happens again. Let me ask you about your state of the city speech. It was my general impression, Mr. Mayor, that you were focusing on nitty gritty details of city management, like expanding the composting program, providing better health screening for

people living in the city's homeless shelters, that kind of a thing. Are you consciously trying to make that your brand, city operations?

Mayor Adams: Actually, and that's a great question, Errol, because it is not small items. It is items, when you do them upstream, they don't turn into big items downstream. People often ask, "What is your signature issue like pre-K?" Dyslexia screening. 30 percent to 40 percent of our inmates are dyslexic in jail. 80 percent don't have a high school diploma or equivalency diploma, so it seems like small items, but they're not. These are the major feeders to the crises that we faced. And yes, we have some big ticket items that we are facing. Our composting program, 13 million pounds of waste that we are taking out of our sites into where we dump our garbage. That's an amazing accomplishment and that's for only a three month period. And so when you do an analysis of what we are rolling out, you'll see it's an upstream approach so that we don't have these downstream problems.

Louis: Okay. I will tell you today I downloaded my app and I looked at the local composting gadget that popped up on Franklin Avenue. I may start making some use of it. Let me ask you about something that did come up in the state of the city speech where I just wasn't clear on it. You said that the two biggest ride hailing companies, Uber and Lyft, were going to be emissions-free on a pretty aggressive schedule. I think by 2030, you said. And you said that you would require them. Require sounds like a mandate, like you have some kind of a hook, a regulatory or legal hook to compel them to do this. But you also said that they were either not opposed or they were in favor of it. I just wanted some clarity on that.

Mayor Adams: Well, first of all, look at what we are talking about. A hundred thousand vehicles are going to go electric, and when you add that to our fleet going electric, when you add that to our schools, new schools going electric, there's something there. We are really aggressively moving in the right direction. And yes, Uber and Lyft, they have agreed to it. We didn't have to use a legislative model to get this to accomplish that. That was something that we will always sit down and do if people don't want to move forward, but we're excited about the fact that they realize that electric vehicles, clean environment is a thing for the future and we're excited to get this done.

Louis: Okay. Look, if you're saying we're going to have enough charging stations to service a fleet of a hundred thousand cars in the next seven years, that's a pretty big deal.

Mayor Adams: Yes. But it's something else we're saying. To have electric charging stations, that's just fixing one problem. I'm a believer of one solution should fix multiple problems. That's why we have what's called BlocPower. This is an organization that trained formally justice-involved young people to install and fix those electric charging stations. That's a win-win for me, and that's how we like to get things done.

Louis: Okay. We shall see. You and Governor Hochul spoke today about the 16 percent decline in subway crime since October. The take home message, if I understand it right, is that fewer than two serious incidents are happening per 1 million rides and that that's a level of safety that you and the governor and the chair of the MTA are saying riders or the general public should find that to be reasonable, not perfect, but reasonable and manageable.

Mayor Adams: No, not at all. It's not reasonable to me. I'm not going to be happy until we don't have any crimes, particularly felony crimes. We have an average of six felony crimes a day with 3.9 million riders. We want to get down to zero. I want New Yorkers to know that we are going to do everything that's possible to accomplish that. That's when we are happy. That's when we can spike the ball. But let's be clear on this. The customer satisfactory survey says it all. I've said it for the longest that it is not only what we do statistically and safety with the numbers, but how do New Yorkers feel? That customer satisfactory survey of satisfaction or extremely satisfied jumped 18 percentage. Think about that for a moment. In such a short period of time, that's what I call moving in the right direction.

Louis: And that's a good measure, but those people swiping their Metrocard is also a pretty good measure. People are using it. I have noticed that the trains are more crowded these days. People seem to be voting with their feet and their Metrocards.

Mayor Adams: Yes, without a doubt. And I use the trains often and you know New Yorkers — they are not shy about giving you their opinion. And that is what our state of the city address was about. It was from a year of hearing from New Yorkers. We lean into housing, jobs, care and safety. That's what I heard over and over. That's a working-class person's agenda and that's what we're going to improve on. We were successful in Albany. Our theme is, "We got it for you. Now we have to get it to you." That's how you make things successful.

Louis: Okay. Let me ask you an Albany question by the way. You repeatedly praised Governor Hochul. It's very unusual that the governor even showed up at a state of the city address. She's in the middle of a pretty tough fight with the state Senate over her choice for who should be the chief judge of New York. I was wondering if you have an opinion about whether Hector LaSalle should be approved and if you could even take yourself back to your state Senate days, would you vote with your conference and its leadership or would you make a different kind of assessment of his candidacy?

Mayor Adams: I was impressed by his record. I was impressed by how he rose to the level of the judiciary that he rose to. I think that it should go to the Senate floor. Let's have the debate on the floor. That is what I enjoyed about being in the Senate. You will debate these issues. You will give your colleagues an opportunity to vote or which way they believe it should go. I think it should go to the floor and I'm hoping that we can find a way to allow the full Senate to vote for it.

Louis: Okay. Does that mean... Because it doesn't necessarily mean he would be approved. Are you saying you want to make sure that there's a floor vote or are you hoping the vote will be one of approval?

Mayor Adams: Well, I think that when you allow the vote to go to the floor, you find out some of the conversations you had within the committee. I think that those senators that want to vote on behalf of the judge can make that determination. I've found his record to be extremely impressive. I believe he served well as a judge and I think that we should have an opportunity to air out what are the things that people feel are against voting for him and those things that people feel are positive. And I think it should go to the floor to be voted on by the entire body.

Louis: Okay, so sounds like you would be a yes if you were back in the Senate. Let me ask you about a different legal question. Has the corporation counsel or anybody else on your staff given you a reading on whether or not the arriving migrants do indeed fall under the existing right to shelter that is New York law?

Mayor Adams: Well, and they'll do that. We've had several conversations and the corp counsel will deal with all the legal aspects of it. I am clear on what I believe and the corporation counsel would defend any position that we take. I think that when our creators of the right to shelter law, clearly, they did not anticipate 3,000 coming in one week, 800 in one day, 42,000 in such a short period of time. And I think we need to really analyze that. And keep in mind, everyone that has arrived here received the same level of fairness and treatment. We don't have people sleeping on the streets. I was in El Paso, Texas where people are sleeping on the streets, sleeping in airports. I see what's happening across the country. We have addressed the needs of everyone that came here. Not only for beds, Errol, we also give them healthcare, food, clothing, educating over 11,000 children. We're doing our share. It's time for the national government to step up. And the corporation counsel will make the determination if we have to in any way litigate this issue.

Louis: As a practical matter, would you really even be able to when a bunch of people show up at the intake center on the East Side for example? Would you really, as a practical matter, be able to ask them a set of questions and say, "Okay, you wait on this line and other people go to this line depending on what the source of your homelessness is?"

Mayor Adams: No. And that's why we have a blanket policy that we treat everyone fairly. That's what we do. But if you have busloads coming in, if you have 3,000... I am concerned that if the border reopens the way it was previously, we can see anywhere from 2,000 to 3,000 people can come into the city. How do we practically ensure in a short period of time that they're going to be inside a bed somewhere. We may lose one or two of them, so we don't want to be accused of violating the spirit of making sure that New Yorkers and those who come to this city are treated fairly. And that's what we've done with over 42,000 people that have come to this city. The city has stepped up. It's time for the national government to do its job, comprehensive immigration reform and deal with the immediate crises that cities like New York are facing.

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Louis: Welcome back to Inside City Hall where we're bringing you my conversation with Mayor Adams. We get into the status of the city's public housing authority, the future of Rikers Island, and much more in part two of our interview.

I want to go back to your state of the city speech and talk about something you didn't include, and I know that always drives people crazy. You got a lot of applause about the speech. It was a great speech, you touched on a lot of things, and I do want to ask you about some of the ticking time bombs that are going to end up in your inbox sooner or later. One of them is at the housing authority, the New York City Housing Authority, where it's been reported that people are behind on their rent or that unpaid rent that's not necessarily going to be compensated at the federal level is over \$400 million. I think the number is \$443 million. It's a third of the agency's budget. Is there a plan to deal with that and is eviction and possibly even mass eviction, is that off the table as a solution?

Mayor Adams: Well, first, we must get leadership over at NYCHA. As you know, Greg Russ has departed. We want to put in place a chair and put in place someone that's leading there. Leadership matters. And, no, we're not going to look at mass eviction. That would only aggravate the problem. It is imperative that — NYCHA and authorities and the city and federal government — we all come together and deal with this major crisis for public housing. We've invested in public housing, as you know. We invested over \$23 billion in our housing plan. First time NYCHA has ever been mentioned in the overall housing plan. I know how important it is for those 400,000 residents in NYCHA, and we are not going to allow mass evictions of those who are in public housing.

Louis: Are you going to give a mandate to whoever is the next CEO of the agency to do something about this wave of unpaid bills that are going to cripple the budget of the agency?

Mayor Adams: Yes. We're going to do the same thing anytime people get into fiscal restraints due to the impact of Covid. There are ways to put people on payment plans. There's ways to go to our federal government and get the assistance. Our congressional delegation, they have been real partners, Senator Schumer and Congressman Jeffries, the minority leader, and all of our congressional delegation. They're going to look at this and, as a team, we're going to come together and come up with a real resolution so we don't have mass evictions in our public housing stock.

Louis: Okay. And, Mr. Mayor, the other big ticking time bomb that's going to end up in your inbox, of course, is Rikers Island. By law, that central jail model is supposed to end in 2027. Your Corrections commissioner has suggested that the count though may be going up and there's always this open question about what happens to people who really belong in a hospital and not necessarily in confinement. Do you think that 2027 date is realistic and do you plan to try and meet it?

Mayor Adams: Well, I say over and over again, my plan is to fulfill the legal responsibilities that's associated with closing Rikers, but I'm never going to do anything that's going to impact public safety. And if we're already at over 5,000 population and the predicted amount for borough based jails is a little over 3,000, those numbers just don't add up. There should have been a plan A and a plan B that if we don't reach the right prison population, how do we respond? One of the big problems that we are facing is the bottleneck of our court system. No one should be on Rikers for the long period of times people are on Rikers, and then we need to be honest about those that shouldn't be there in the first place, particularly dealing with mental health issues. Close to 48 percent of the people on Rikers Island are dealing with mental health issues. They need service and care, not incarceration.

Louis: Okay. I mean, it sounds like if you got 48 percent out of that 5,000, you'd be right in the zone where you could close the place down, right?

Mayor Adams: That's right. And that's why we have to do it right and we need to shift people to the care that they need to make sure that they're receiving care and not incarceration.

Louis: Okay. In our last minute, I don't want us to part without talking a little bit about wellness. I wanted you to give my viewers a quick scan of your day, in particular, how you fit meals into your workday. Are you sandwich-at-the-desk kind of guy? I mean, from your book it said that that's what got you in trouble in the first place before you had to change around a lot of your habit.

Mayor Adams: Well, you know what it is? That's my next book. I'm going to show people creative ways to get body movement into their day. People think exercise means a gym membership or having to run around the track, and it's not true. Getting that standing desk, getting off the train one stop before your stop and taking a nice walk, walking upstairs sometimes, finding ways to eat healthy, good tasting food, starting that day with a smoothie. It's unbelievable how it carries you into lunch. And so there's so many hidden secrets on how to have a balanced diet and a balanced lifestyle, and you feel so much better after it. I'm now into deep breathing. I'm a whim huff guy, and breathing is a powerful tool that people should utilize as well. Health is wealth and I want a healthy and wealthy city.

Louis: Okay, don't take time for the book. Come on and talk about it with us, but we'll have to do that another time. Thanks a lot for joining us, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor Adams: Thank you. Take care.

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