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TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR ERIC ADAMS APPEARS LIVE ON MSNBC'S "MORNING JOE"

Willie Geist: Joe and Mika will be back on Monday. It was one year ago this weekend when this took place in Times Square.

(Playback of Mayor Eric Adams, swearing in as New York City's 110th mayor, this time last year.)

Geist: New York City Mayor Eric Adams, sworn in shortly after this year's ball drop in Times Square, holding a framed picture of his late mother, Dorothy, while vowing to faithfully carry out the duties as Mayor of New York City. And Mayor Adams joins us now. Mr. Mayor, thanks so much for being with us. We've got a table of people who want to ask you some questions here this morning. And I'll start with the issue that brought you into office. If you look at the polling that came out afterward, which is public safety, a former New York City cop who promised to change the way the city feels and the way it has felt for the last couple of years, crime is up 23 percent over the last few ... murders and shootings are down, but other crimes are up. You've promised more stronger policing in 2023 to continue to get at those numbers. What does that mean to you? What does that look like for this city?

Mayor Eric Adams: Well, let's go back to January and February. We were up in our major crime categories by 40 percent. When you look now, you see a trend. They're up about 20 percent. And when you look at the last almost eight weeks, you're seeing a continuous substantial decline. So the seeds that we planted that allowed us to do what was my number one focus, shootings and homicides, down double digits in shootings, down double digits in homicides. Look on our transit systems, 6.3 crimes a day with 3.9 million riders. That is the lowest of numbers that we've seen in decades.

So we are moving in the right direction. My anti-gun unit is moving in the right direction. Police are responding accordingly and we are moving in the place that we need to be. The big problem we have, we have a catch, release, repeat system. Approximately 1,600 people, repeated

offenders, once we arrest them for gun charges and other violent crimes, they're back out on our streets. It is just not sustainable to continue to do this with our criminal justice system.

Geist: Well, you led me to my next question, Mr. Mayor. A few minutes ago, we were talking about the State of Illinois and Cook County in Chicago getting rid of cash bail coming up here in the new year. That's something you've grappled with in New York City in your first year as New York City Mayor. What needs to change about that law so you don't have police officers coming to you and saying, "We arrested this guy yesterday and saw him back committing a crime on the subway today?" How do you change that with the help of Albany?

Mayor Adams: Well, number one, we pinpoint the exact problem. When you look at what's called the criminal justice reform, these were my bills. These are the bills I sponsored and looked forward to when I was in the State Senate. It was about fixing a broken system, which is still broken, let me be clear on that, but we need to zero in on the recidivous, the repeated offender. As I stated, approximately 1,694 people are repeatedly arrested for violent acts. We just had an incident a few days ago, about a month and a half ago, of a person who shot three individuals, a 96-year-old man, a young lady, and another gentleman. He had a longer arrest record out on probation or bail for what his actions were. That is what is feeding the criminal justice problem, not only in New York, but across this entire country, the repeated offenders, and we need to zero in on them. And that's my fight when I return to Albany to say, "Let's zero in on the recidivous and let's tweak the law so that they can't continue to prey on innocent people in our city."

Reverend Al Sharpton: Mayor Adams, as you deal with the recidivism, which is a problem, it's also not at the expense of those that just can't afford to get out. So at one level, you've got to deal with protecting people that just can't afford to be treated justly in terms of bail reform, but at another level, the recidivism, that's one of the reasons that we've said that many of our top black lawmakers that have a summit, which you've agreed to and our state leaders have agreed to, because it's how do you strike the middle of trying to get this done where we don't sacrifice people's liberties based on their economic standing, but at the same time, we don't have our communities that are subjected to violent criminals. And I think the data shows that, under your year, we've gone down in high areas, but we could even go down more if we could all get on some kind of unified page, even if we don't agree with some of the details.

Mayor Adams: So true. And it's about justice. It's not about just prosecuting, it's not about just incarceration. And I stated this on the campaign trail, and I live through it now, intervention prevention. And when you zero in on the criminal justice system, my DAs don't have enough attorneys, my defense attorneys don't have enough attorneys. People should not sit in jail waiting to go to trial in a bottleneck system, but there's something else, Reverend Sharpton, that many people don't realize. There has never been a mayor in the history of this city that is doing more in the prevention area like I am.

What does that look like? 90,000 summer youth jobs for our young people that are not on the street, never has been done before in history; paying for tuition for foster care children, college tuition, \$15,000 private and public school; what we did with our Summer Rising program, 110,000 children were able to go to school throughout the summer so that they can catch up in the learning loss that we witnessed; justice-involved young people, we are partnering with

blockchain to make sure that they can have some of the green jobs that are available, connecting them with probation offices so that we can prevent the crimes from taking place. I visited Rikers Island more than any mayor in probably in the history of this city, talking to inmates, correction officers. And so you see my prevention plan to stop the pipeline and you see my intervention plan to go after those dangerous individuals in our city.

Reverend Sharpton: And don't we need more resources in prevention, as well as more resources in terms of people that will defend people that need defense, like legal aid is not getting funded a lot? So don't we need a lot more resources in the right place rather than trying to catch it at the end of what happens that is sometimes ugly and unfair?

Mayor Adams: I know, without a doubt, once a person has a gun in his hand, we've already failed. And that is what has been happening far too long. My policies are not based on what I've read, they're based on the life that I lived. I know what it is to be arrested. I know what it is to be dyslexic and undiagnosed and could end up in the criminal justice system. I know what it is to live on the verge of homelessness and poverty. So you have a mayor that has lived a life of people that are living right now, but we have to be honest with ourselves.

Our city, as well as Chicago, as well as other major cities, we've been inundated with crises that we did not create, such as the asylum seekers crisis. El Paso should not be going through this, New York should not be going through this, Houston should not be going through this. This is a national problem and deserves a national response. 31,000 people showed up at our doorstep and I had to deal with making sure they were not sleeping on the streets, they were able to get housing, food, educating children. This is a real strain on New York that's coming out of the pandemic.

Jonathan Lemire: Well, Mayor Adams, this is Jonathan Lemire, I wanted to talk to you about the issue of homelessness here in the city. The stats are staggering from the group, The Coalition for the Homeless. More than 22,000 single adults slept in shelters just in one night a few weeks ago. Number of homeless New Yorkers sleeping each night in shelters, up 35 percent than a decade ago. And there's a sense that the total number of homeless in New York is the highest since the Great Depression nearly a century ago. Now, you unveiled a new plan that involuntarily takes some of those with mental illness off the streets, but critics suggest that police officers, so you've appointed as, you've empowered to make that decision, are the wrong people for that job. What is your response to that? And give us your take on ... Tell New Yorkers your plan, overall plan, to battle homelessness.

Mayor Adams: Well first, let's peel back the layers. I think it was just unfair on how we reported a very clear approach to those with mental health illness that cannot take care of their basic needs and they are in danger to themselves. That is who will participate in the involuntary bringing to the hospital to do a proper diagnosis. It is inhumane to allow people to stay on the street that cannot take care of their basic needs and they're a danger to themselves. So the way it was reported that whoever had a mental health illness would be swept up off the street and removed to the hospital, that is just untrue. That is not what we said. And anyone that wants the status quo of allowing people with severe mental health illness and can't take care of their needs,

if they want them to stay on the streets, that is inhumane, that is unacceptable and is not going to happen.

Under my administration, I came in with a clear mandate. I stated that we're not going to allow encampments and people to live on the streets. We focus on that. We're doing that. We removed all the encampments on our subway system. We're doing the same thing on our streets. Our streets would not be lined with people living in tents, living in cardboard boxes with human waste, drug paraphernalia, dealing with schizophrenic behavior, bipolar. It's not acceptable, and that is what we focus on.

The other mistruth is that this is not a police led initiative. We keep saying it over and over again and people keep reporting as such. We have outreach workers and mental health professionals that are reaching out. Now, do you need the police in cases? A few days ago, a mother called for her son who was dealing with a mental health illness when the police arrived, the young man stabbed his mother and stabbed the police officer in the arm.

These are real issues and they're not just a cookie cutter approach to it. You have to have the right balance. And lastly, the homeless issue is a real issue. We know it far too well in New York City. We are right to Shelter City where we have to give everyone who's looking for shelter, shelter within a certain amount of time. And the only way you can do that is to build more housing. Far too many local officials who call for building more housing says, "Yes, build it, but don't build it on my block. Don't build it in my district." No, the housing issue is a citywide issue and there cannot be any sacred communities that are not going to be part of the building process. And that's what we've done. Units in Willis Points, units in the Bronx that historically did not have them, units in parts of Manhattan that we want to rezone. So, we know how severe this issue is and the only way to combat it is to build more housing. And that's what we're going to do in this administration.

Mara Gay: Okay. Mr. Mayor, Mara Gay here. Happy New Year. You know-

Mayor Adams: Same to you.

Gay: Thank you. It's very easy when you're mayor to get bogged down in a series of crises and each mayor has certainly dealt with his share, but you've been in office a year, and so Michael Bloomberg, in his first year in office, banned smoking, also gained control of city schools for the first time ever. Mayor Bill de Blasio launched his pre-K initiative to provide universal pre-K for every New Yorker. Is there a signature initiative that you hope to become associated with? Something that New Yorkers can feel?

Mayor Adams: Yeah, well, think about it for a moment, Mara, and you're right. First mayor in the history that has dyslexia screening for every young person entering our system. And what does that mean? It means that 30 to 40 percent of the inmates at Rikers Island are dyslexic. I am stopping that pipeline. First mayor in history that was able to get the NYCHA Land Trust passed and get real economics and NYCHA and part of our multi-billion dollar housing plan. Never been done before. Many people have tried, but they failed. Increase in earned income tax credit for those family that needs additional money in their pockets. Billions of dollars going into

childcare. Something that is one of the number one issues that parents can't get back to work and get adequate childcare. Expanding childcare to be really universal. Children with mental health or disabilities or other areas, they're now getting childcare seats where they can get the same thing that other children were not getting.

So yes, not just one signature issue. I don't want to be known by one person in a broken system. I want to be known as a mayor that came in, identified the brokenness of systems and how we betrayed New Yorkers and make sure we turn that around. And that's what we're seeing every day in our policies and our initiatives in just one year.

Geist: Mr. Mayor, before we let you go, what's tomorrow night going to look like in Times Square? Since obviously, the last two decades or so, we've been so focused on security around New Year's Eve in Times Square. Looks like, by the way, a warm night, maybe a little bit of rain, but at least it'll be warm out there. You confident it'll be a secure and celebratory night in Times Square?

Mayor Adams: When you reflect on this administration, the year, in order to give it the proper analysis, you must see what we inherited. And we've never lived and just surviving. We lived and thriving. We inherited a Covid problem. We inherited a issue with crime resurging. We inherited our economy that was in a terrible state, and you're seeing a recovery that's taking place in this city. We inherited Monkeypox, we inherited polio, we inherited an economic challenge, and we look at all of those things, in spite of those things, we continue to move the ball forward and we are going to bring in the new year. I say all the time, 2022 was my rookie year, 2023 is my Aaron Judge year, and I look forward to being at the plate to bring it home for us.

Geist: Well, that might have been the greatest year in the history of baseball. So, the bar has been set. Hi, New York City Mayor, Eric Adams. Congratulations on one year in office. We'll look forward to talking to you in your second year. Happy New Year, sir.

Mayor Adams: Thank you. Happy New Year to you all.

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