

Transcript: Mayor Eric Adams Hosts and Delivers Remarks at Reception for Juneteenth Celebration

June 16, 2022

Doctor Ingrid Lewis-Martin, Chief Advisor to the Mayor: Good evening. Come on. I need a little more love than that. Good evening. It's so good to see so many familiar faces. I don't want to start naming names because I'll get in trouble, but I got to say a couple of names. Always our sponsor, George Hulse. Come on now. Doctor Charles, we see you. Reverend Williams, we see you. Brooklyn, are you in the house? The Bronx, are you in the house? Manhattan, are you in the house? Queens, are you in the house? I'm going to go on a limb, but, Staten Island, are you in the house? Okay. So we got all five boroughs covered, right? Because our mayor is a mayor for all people and during the most turbulent times. This is our first celebration for Juneteenth. In less than six months, our mayor did what people said was impossible. He was able to get Juneteenth a [city] holiday. So, it is my pleasure and my honor to present to you... I'm presenting him because everybody in this room knows our mayor, our 110th mayor of the City of New York, Eric Adams.

Mayor Eric Adams: Before I do my thing, I want to just bring on our electeds that are here because they're real partners in government. And as we get things done, it is with their partnership that we're able to accomplish that. I want to first start out with my sister, Assemblywoman Jenifer Rajkumar. Come and say a few words.

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Mayor Adams: And the amazing Assemblywoman from Bed-Stuy, the 56th Assembly District, Assemblywoman Stefani Zinerman.

[...]

Mayor Adams: And our lieutenant governor, [Antonio] Delgado.

[...]

Mayor Adams: And lastly, my sister who just is a fearless warrior, she's now the cultural affairs commissioner in the City of New York, Laurie Cumbo.

Commissioner Laurie Cumbo, Department of Cultural Affairs: I love you too. Wow, we've come a long way. I remember when Eric first called me and told me that he was running and would I be at his first endorsement announcement that he was running for the mayor of the City of New York. I was so honored that you called me. I was so honored that you asked me to take this monumental historical journey with you. And it was an honor to stand there with you in the highs and the lows of this campaign, because there were highs and there were lows. There were tough times, there were people that did not want to see you have this position and did everything in their power to try and stop what God had ordained.

Commissioner Cumbo: But they could not stop it. I want you to think about for a minute where we are. I want you to think for a minute what it took to get to this moment. African people who wanted to lead, who wanted to legislate, but were forced to wash dishes. Black women who wanted to stand up and wanted to be educators, wanted to be all of the things that they could be, doctors and nurses, but they were forced to clean. They were forced to wash tables and floors. And not that there's any less dignity in that work, but when that's the only option that you have because of the color of your skin. We understand now this position and this moment, a lot of people, our people were denied the right to do so many things.

Commissioner Cumbo: Black hands that built Gracie Mansion, black hands that made New York City what it is today, Black hands that were denied an opportunity. And now we have 110th mayor in Eric Adams who represents the dreams of so many Black people who were denied an opportunity to be. We were at a dinner one night and a woman said, and I remember this. She said, "When you're on a plane, always vote for and support the pilot. Make sure when you are on a plane that you are rooting for the pilot." We are on this journey, this is the pilot. We have to root for him, we have to work for him, we have to protect him, we have to move his agenda forward, we have to make sure that he succeeds, because our children are counting on his success. So we have

to make sure we do that. This man that comes from Brownsville, that comes from Queens. Okay?

Commissioner Cumbo: This man just presided over the largest budget in New York City's history, \$101 billion. He was able to decide that those resources would go back into the communities that need it most. And I just want to say as commissioner for the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, he just passed the largest cultural budget in New York City's history. You're going to see organizations of all colors, but mostly in the outer boroughs are now going to be lifted up for the first time in ways that they never were before. So I thank you. It's been an honor to take this journey with you and I'll just close by saying, you haven't seen nothing yet. All right, ladies and gentlemen, Eric Adams.

Mayor Adams: And if I may, I know he's in the house, Reverend Herbert Daughtry. Reverend Herbert Daughtry, who started me on this journey so many years ago when I was a youth leader for the National Black United Front. My spiritual father and fellow plant-based eater. Say a few words, rev.

[...]

Mayor Adams: Still firing, still firing. You may not be able to see, but you notice I've been looking over my shoulders because on the right hand side, on the top of the curtain, there was a bird that landed in the beginning. That bird is still here. And sometimes we don't understand the symbols that are for us and this journey. And it was extremely instructional to have Reverend Daughtry give the history because there's a lot of youthful, energetic energy that is around right now. And somehow we have incorporated this belief that not to understand how we got here. I'll never forget Reverend Daughtry, [inaudible], and some other leaders. There was a meeting that we had at one of the churches. And I'm not sure if it was Randolph Evans or one of the issues around policing.

Mayor Adams: It could have been even back when Clifford Glover, the 10 year old young child, that was shot in South Jamaica, Queens or Arthur Miller. Matter of fact, I believe it was Arthur Miller. And we were all inside a meeting and a group of young people there. I think I was 18 years old and a group of young people were in the room and the elders were trying to tell us how to move forward. And a group of the young people there said, "Get out of the way. You are too old. You don't understand the

movement. You don't know what you're doing." And I remember rolling up a piece of paper, into a form of a baton. And I walked to the front of the room and I dropped to one knee. And I handed the baton to those elders. And I said to the young people who were in this room that we have to run our mile. Nat Turner ran his mile so he could hand it off to Sojourner Truth.

Mayor Adams: She ran her mile so she could hand it off to Marcus Garvey. Marcus Garvey ran his mile so he could hand it off to Rosa Parks. Rosa Parks ran her mile so she could hand it off to Jesse Jackson. Jesse Jackson ran his mile and he handed off to Reverend Sharpton. Sharpton ran his mile. He handed off to Barack Obama. Barack Obama ran his mile, handed off to the Vice President Harris. Vice President Harris is running her mile and she's handed it off to Eric to be the mayor of the City of New York.

Mayor Adams: It's the continuation of the mile. And if you become so arrogant and so pompous in your state of existence, believing this is a 50 yard dash. And just because you are new to this, that you all of a sudden understand the learning experience of every mile, no slow down. Understand who has already run the mile, learn from them, build on what they've done. Don't start from scratch again. What is the purpose of running these miles, just for you to come and partner with those who don't look like you and give you an agenda that you going to start following.

Mayor Adams: Stop the silliness! Like it or not, I'm the pilot. If the plane crashes, we all crash, we all crash. So if you are sitting in first class or row 79D I got to land this plane, I got to land this plane. And so we need to stop all the madness.

Mayor Adams: Don't look at what you disagree with, look at what you agree with. Look at the fact that I'm the only mayor in history that has done and put in place dyslexia screening for all of our children. So 30% of our prisoners are not going to be dyslexic. Only mayor in history that is doing dyslexia screening in our jails. So when our young people come home, they're coming home to opportunities, not to be part of a revolving door system. Only mayor in history that is putting billions into childcare, so our mothers can have adequate childcare for their children. Only mayor in history with 100,000 summer youth jobs and pushing for 100% paid internship program.

Mayor Adams: Only mayor in history that is accomplishing feat after feat after feat. And folks are wondering why they didn't want me to get in. They knew who I was. I never kept it a secret. Never stood back and said, once I become mayor, I'm going to become

a different person. You don't dedicate your life on fighting on behalf of liberation and then all of a sudden turn down and act like you want to be on the plantation. That's not who I am.

Mayor Adams: And I don't get caught up in all the noise. All the distractions, all the people pulling you off your game. You can say what you want. You can write what you want. You can do what you want, but I'm the mayor. Dyslexic arrested, rejected. Now I'm elected.

Mayor Adams: So what does that say? That says to the third grade child that is told he can't read or write, and he'll never be anything because he's dyslexic or he has a learning disability or ADD that says to him that look what he is. That says to the young person who I spoke with the other day, when I was on Rikers Island, talking to those graduates who got their degrees and want to do something with their lives. Where you are, is not who you are. That jail cell is not who you are. Who you are, is when you come out and motivate yourself. And so what we are going to do, we are going to put the resources in place so that they're able to believe in themselves. My election is a symbol. It's not me. It's not Eric Adams becoming mayor. It is a symbol of the possibilities in this city.

Audience: That's right.

Mayor Adams: We are going to unleash the possibilities. And trust me, when I tell you as Archbishop Desmond Tutu once said, that we spent a lifetime pulling people out of the river. No one goes upstream and prevents them from falling in in the first place. Now ask yourself why. Who are we pulling out of the river downstream?

Audience: Us.

Mayor Adams: Black and brown people.

Audience: There we go.

Mayor Adams: And so the mindset is people are making paper off of pulling us out of the river. So what I'm doing, I'm not threatening the people who are being pulled out of the river. I'm threatening the profits that people make from pulling us out of the river.

Mayor Adams: See, because if you invest in foster care, children, upstream, then they don't fall in the river and you pull them out downstream for mental health illnesses and other crises. If you invest in dyslexia screening upstream, you're not pulling them out downstream because they're arrested. If you invest in healthcare upstream, then you're not allowing our mothers to have surgery, removing body parts, losing their sight. If you invest in maternal health upstream, then you won't have Black women dying 12 times the rate of white women for maternal morbidity.

Mayor Adams: If you take this game upstream, then you're not going to be wasting money downstream. You're taking money out of the pockets of people who have been eating off of us because of the dysfunctionality of a downstream mindset. This is about the profitizing of poverty.

Mayor Adams: And why do you go anywhere in this country, Chicago, Los Angeles, Washington, St. Louis, no matter where you go, why is it the same people experiencing the same thing? So that's all the attacks, folks. All those attacks you see, it's I'm messing with people paper.

Audience: Of course.

Mayor Adams: And so everybody's not going to be with us. Some people that even look like us is going to attack us. And you just got to say, for me, from the body of my heart, you got to say, "Negro, if you not with Eric, you need to get out of the way. Just get out of the way. Get out of the way." This is our moment. This is our moment.

Audience: That's right.

Mayor Adams: We don't have to leave people behind. We don't have to be in a state where if you're Jewish, you're attack with antisemitism. We don't have to be in a city where if you're from the AAPI community and your mother or father or grandfather cannot leave homes because people are attacking you, for no reason at all. We don't have to be in the city if you're a member of the LGBTQ+ community, people are assaulting you and attacking you just because of who you choose to be. We don't to be in a city where African Americans cannot move up in titles and rank, just because of their ethnicity. Those other groups are treated unfairly. We don't have to live in a city like that.

Mayor Adams: And we don't have to be against folks to be for something. That's all we have to do. We are in this together. We are in the same plane together, using the metaphor from my sister, Laurie Cumbo, we're in the same plane together. Kobe showed us. If the plane crash, we all going down. Don't be that crazy passenger that want to destroy the pilot without realizing he's on it also. You cannot destroy me without destroying yourself.

Mayor Adams: That's what this moment is about.

Audience: That's right.

Mayor Adams: Don't be so angry that you are going to become so destructive to destroy what we are trying to accomplish.

Mayor Adams: We are moving in the right direction. We are winning.

Audience: We are winning.

Mayor Adams: We are winning. 100,000 new jobs in the first quarter. Hotels are returning with their occupancy to hire HTC union workers. Tourism is coming back to the city. Just the other day, we had 350 something thousand people in Times Square, people are getting backed into the offices. People are getting back on our subway system. The energy, as we turn into the city, we are winning. Don't allow the naysayers to let you believe, because you have a successful Black mayor that's doing the right thing, we took our bond rating from stable to optimistic, because we're making the right decisions with our budget, your tax dollars.

Mayor Adams: We're winning, New York. And we're going to become the symbol for this entire country on how to do it right and how to get it right without leaving anyone behind.

Mayor Adams: I see many of your faces. You've been here from the start, never gave up. Always stated that Eric was with you. I don't know how many years I've known Dr. Charles, all these years, side by side, Charles George Holt. So many of you said that we believe in the mission. We believe in accomplishing the task.

Mayor Adams: This is a difficult task. You know what, I'm not always going to get it right. I tell people from the start, I'm perfectly imperfect, but I'm dedicated. In the years of dedication, you can all go back and see, I have publicly lived a life of improving the lives of New Yorkers, publicly. And this is the moment when all of it comes together, all of our prayers, all of our hopes, all of our dreams.

Mayor Adams: Last year before taking office, I took the trip to Ghana, and went into the dungeons. I saw those spaces where our ancestors spent months living in their own waste, not seeing sunlight. Many of them died on this voyage over here, only to come here and live a more horrific journey than what they did on the travel. And got here and continued to fortify their beliefs, continued to fight for it, so that we can get here.

Audience: That's right.

Mayor Adams: And so today on Juneteenth celebration, they're sitting here right now in the spirit of that bird. They want us to know they're proud of us. We could have been broken. We could have been torn apart. We could have just threw up our hands and we could have given up. But instead we kept moving forward. We are here because they were there. Yes, it took two and a half years from the time of slavery, the emancipation proclamation being signed, to Galveston, finally getting the word and free.

Mayor Adams: But in all sincerity and honesty, we still aren't free. Physically off the plantation does not mean you are free. Let's free ourselves from the things that are binding us to the past. This is our moment. The year that this mayor made Juneteenth a citywide holiday. This year, that this mayor is going to continue to knock down those barriers that prevented us before. Now it's our time to use this opportunity.

Mayor Adams: Think about it for a moment. We have a person of color that's mayor. We have an attorney general that's of color. We have a public advocate that's of color. We have the leader of the Assembly that's of color. We have the leader of the Senate that's of color. We have one of the most powerful men in Washington, D.C. that's heading the Democratic Conference that's of color. We have all of this chocolate.

Mayor Adams: If we do nothing with it but fight against each other, then what did we do?

Audience: Speak on it.

Mayor Adams: This is what we prayed for. This is what we asked for. We are now at a place of power. The power we march for, we protest for, we fought for, now we're here.

Audience: Hallelujah.

Mayor Adams: Now the question becomes, what are we going to do with it?

Audience: Work together. We got to support.

Mayor Adams: I want to work together to get stuff done. We need to come together to get stuff done. This Juneteenth, let's rededicate ourselves to the upliftment of all that we fought for. I cannot thank you enough for believing, never surrendering and allowing me to run my mile so I can pass the baton off to the next person in the relay.

Mayor Adams: God bless you. Thank you.

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