

THE CITY OF NEW YORK
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NEW YORK, NY 10007

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: December 27, 2022, 4:30 PM
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**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR ERIC ADAMS PRESENTS PROCLAMATION
RECOGNIZING HEROISM OF JOHN CATANIA**

Pastor Gilford Monroe, Faith Advisor, Office of the Mayor: Good afternoon to everyone and welcome to City Hall. It is good to be here with all of you. I'm Pastor Gil Monroe. I'm the executive director of the Office of Faith-Based and Community Partnerships, along with our colleagues from the Community Affairs. And we want to give a special thanks to Mohammed Bahi for making this day possible. Of everyday heroes, the mayor always talks about the fact that there was an artist who was drawing a young man who had a scar on his face, and he always said that we should not forget his face even though he has a scar. And I think that every New Yorker, as you look at it, there's so many good deeds. Could you imagine, if for one whole week that we only mention the good things that New Yorkers would do to one another, how great New York would look?

Mayor Eric Adams: I can tell you're a pastor.

(Laughter.)

Pastor Monroe: Well, today we want to celebrate. We want to stop and pause for a moment. We know we have a lot of issues that is happening in the city and throughout the world, so much of heaviness. But today's a bright day for us in New York. Every day New Yorkers. So at this time I want to introduce the Mayor of New York City, Mayor Eric Adams.

Mayor Adams: You too. Thank you, Pastor. Thank you so much. I think it's important, and you're right, we often look at the day-to-day strife, the day-to-day tension, and we don't really emphasize how much as New Yorkers we come together, particularly during those times of needs. In this city is an overwhelming number of New Yorkers that care for each other, that come to the aid of each other, and that coexist, I think, by that symbol of all the different religious and philosophical beliefs coexist. This is a city that really is an example of how you coexist. No one does it better than a New Yorker. We coexist every day. And I think John personifies that story. John Catania, who stepped up to assist a fellow New Yorker on the transit system. 3.8 million people utilize that system, we reached a level of 3.9 million. And yes, we have six felony crimes on average a day that we need to zero in on and make sure we have none.

But the reality is that one of those 3.9 million riders is a John. And it says a lot. There's so many John Catantias in our system, every day doing the right thing. Standing up if someone needs a seat in front of them, giving them a swipe if they don't have enough to get on. Coming in defense of someone who's treated unfairly or unjustly. We don't hear about them. They're not part of our narrative because, I guess, it's not attractive. But we heard about you, and we want to say thank you. And as a former transit police officer, I saw it every day during the early '80s, and we're seeing it every day here in this city.

You showed both moral and physical courage of when you swiftly came to the aid of a young woman who was being attacked with a bladed weapon. And normally people run from that, or they pick up their phones or take pictures and not go to the direct aid of their fellow New Yorkers. You did it while sustaining an injury. But we want to thank you and the victim, both are recovering, both you and the victim are recovering. And most importantly, the attacker was apprehended, which is extremely important because of your actions. So I really admire and salute your bravery. And here at City Hall, we like to pause and just acknowledge what you're doing. And you're brave every day, you're in the school system.

And my teachers will tell you, I know there's some little Erics in our school system, so we know how we can be. A teacher at Scarsdale High School, our superheroes don't wear capes. They're in the classroom, they're on our subway system, they're doing the job every day. And your face of danger is really a symbol of what's great about this city, and wow, this is an amazing place with amazing people that are doing amazing things. So on behalf of all New Yorkers, I want to give you this proclamation to thank you for a job well done.

Whereas there's no greater example of the grit that defines the exceptional people who drive our city forward than the kindness, courage, and valor shown by John Catania, of this true New Yorker who possesses a bottomless well of compassion for others, embodies the very best our amazing city has to offer. His heroism, selflessness, and unshakable strength of character will inspire his fellow New Yorkers for years to come. It is contagious to see that level of benevolence. Together, we will continue to work to guarantee safety and security for all who live and visit here and build a better, brighter New York City for all. I, Eric Adams, thank you on this day for being a hero and name this John Catania Day. Eric Adams, Mayor of the City of New York.

(...)

Mayor Adams: Come on, John. You're a teacher, you're used to being up in your... You're used to being in front.

John Catania: All right, all right. Let's keep it quick. But no, I'm just happy to be here. Thank you for the recognition and I'm happy Diamond is feeling well and doing good, and let's keep the positivity up.

Mayor Adams: Lovely. Thank you, thank you. You want to stay, John? Okay.

(...)

Pastor Monroe: So thank you all. No off topic yet, we are going to be on topic for a minute. We have a few speakers. So we have Hassan Naveed who is here with us today. He's going to come. I know that we have short time, but I also want to call after him Affaf Nashar, and then Taher Alhadi, and then Marwa Janini, and then Yvette Sylla, in that order so that we can go to off topic questions. You could come.

Hassan Naveed, Executive Director, New York City Office for the Prevention of Hate Crimes: Is this tall enough for me? Yeah, I think it is. Hello folks.

Pastor Monroe: Go ahead. Musical chairs.

Naveed: Musical chairs. Hello, Assalamu Alaikum to many of my Muslim family here as well. Thank you, Pastor Monroe. Thank you, Mr. Mayor. My name is Hassan Naveed and I'm the executive director for the Office for the Prevention of Hate Crimes. I also want to commend the bravery and courage of Mr. John Catania. There should be a day that's dedicated to heroes like this every day, right? Every Muslim, including myself, is honored to call you a hero. And it's something that I cannot forget. When it comes to upstanders, it's something that our office really does work on. We have our partners against the hate organizations that are really promoting folks to be out there and to be upstanders.

You exemplify the upstander that is direly needed in our city. I also want to thank Ms. Diamond Phillips as well too. It is hard as an individual who is victimized by such an incident to come forward and to be able to talk about this incident at the same time. This administration is committed to ensuring that this city is safe for everyone regardless of who you are and what you are. We don't tolerate this sort of violence against anyone. And as the mayor said, every New Yorker, especially Muslims, will look back at this incident and remember it. So thank you, Mr. Catania, and I'll keep my comments short very much, and I'll... Thank you all so much.

Pastor Monroe: Thank you. Affaf?

Affaf Nashar, Executive Director, Council on American-Islamic Relations New York: I'm loving this little platform thing. That works well.

Pastor Monroe: You feel taller.

Nashar: Yeah. All right. So good afternoon, Assalamu Alaikum. Greetings of peace. My name is Affaf Nashar. I am the executive director for the Council on American Islamic Relations New York. I just want to thank again everyone who put this together, from the mayor to brother Bahi, to the Office of Prevention of Hate Crimes, which has assisted community organizations like ours to combat this proactively, and as well as the pastor, and of course our heroes who we are here to celebrate. We want to remind everyone that the reason that so many Muslims are in this room is because at the time of the assault, there were some anti-Muslim rhetoric remarks that was made towards our sister Diamond. So that is the reason why we're treating this as a hate crime.

And I have to say that is someone who has been in many hospital rooms where I've seen tears, where I've seen broken bones, and why I have unfortunately even been in neighborhoods in

which we've had to bury people because of death that has resulted from hate crimes. This is a much better outcome where we saw an upstander putting himself to the line and actually helping somebody in need, his fellow New Yorker, someone he didn't know. Now I'd be remiss if I didn't mention something that CAIR-New York knows, and that is we don't often report hate crimes, which is why what our sister Diamond is doing is so important as well.

As a matter of fact, only 4 percent of our community members report hate crimes. And that is despite the fact that 64 percent of Muslims in New York City say they've experienced either a hate crime or a bias incident, or both. Now, John is a teacher. 32 percent reported that their victims were a minor, and I believe it was 34 percent outlined in our report that talks about these kinds of incidents happening even in educational institutions. And of course, our mayor has already talked about many of these incidents occurring on our public transportation systems.

These are numbers, but the trauma that people face is real, and that's what we need to focus on. And so we offer our continued prayers to our sister Diamond and brother John for our fast healing. And we offer our support as community organizations and your fellow New Yorkers, and we applaud you for everything that you do. And we ask the mayor and everybody who has a stake in this, which means every single one of us, to also be upstanders in every way that we can be, which includes getting in there and trying to prevent hate crimes to begin with.

Some of the suggestions we outlined in our hate crime report, which includes educating people within the school system at city agencies. Let's be proactive so that we don't have to come together on unfortunately commemorating an occasion of violence. So I thank you all, and mostly thank our upstander John and our sister Diamond for being as brave as you are and being role models for the rest of us. And I thank the mayor's office and NYPD and everyone who had a part in bringing this attacker hopefully to justice. And we're here as a recourse and a resource to every single one of you. Thank you.

Taher Alhadi, Executive Director, Muslim-American Society of New York: Assalamu Alaikum. My name is Taher Alhadi. I'm the executive director for the Muslim American Society of New York. On behalf of mass New York and the Muslim community as a whole, we first want to send our prayers and blessings to Diamond in her recovery, physical and emotional recovery. And we want to thank John for his courage and his bravery. There's a teaching in the Islamic faith that says, "If you see an evil, you must change it with your hand. And if you cannot change it with your hand, then you speak out against it. And if you can't speak out against it, then at the very least, you hate it in your heart." And there is no better embodiment of this teaching and this lesson than what John did on that fateful day. He truly showed what every New Yorker should be doing, standing up and opposing any evil and opposing injustice.

And Mayor Adams mentioned, people pulling out their phones, and I think we all see these videos of crimes happening, and it's very disappointing and terrible to see these crimes. But sometimes the most alarming thing in these videos is all of the people just kind of standing around, and you're like, "Wait, there's a whole train full of people, a bunch of grown men. Not one person stands up?" And John was one of those people that stands up.

And even in our city, when we look at how we can have a more loving and cohesive city, we sometimes look outwards. What's the city going to do? What's the NYPD going to do? But we

need to look inwards as a community, and Muslim-American Society, we work on nurturing people and inspiring change. And our focus is really trying to get people to be kind of like John, right? You see something, you say something, you prevent it, you be a positive agent of change. And again, on behalf of everybody, thank you John for what you did. You're an example for everybody.

Yvette Sylla: Assalamu Alaikum. Okay. My name is Yvette Sylla, and I'm a fellow New Yorker who rides the train. It's a quote in the Quran that talks about if you hurt one person, you hurt mankind. All right? If you do, if you help one person, you help mankind. All right? John, I want to thank you because it was very important that you showed bravery and courage when you seen the young lady in distress, okay? I would also like to say mom and dad, you raised a brave, and you should be very proud of your son. And last but not least, I want to take a page out of the MTA. If you see something, say something. All right.

Marwa Janini, Executive Director, Arab American Association of New York: Assalamu Alaikum and good afternoon. Thank you all for gathering today to join in recognizing and celebrating a New York City hero, John Catania. As a mother and as a woman, as a mother to two Muslim daughters, it is empowering to see us coming together to stand and say in unison that we will never tolerate hate. My name is Marwa Janini, and I'm the executive director of the Arab American Association of New York, a community-based organization that has been serving South Brooklyn and all of New York City for over 20 years. We have been there for our community members as they have weathered overwhelming and often violent Islamophobia, living with the fear and the reality of Muslim surveillance and abuse from institutions meant to protect us, and learning to navigate these challenges in light of the historical apathy to tackle these injustices head on. I'm sure many of my Muslim CBO leaders will agree with me when I say that tackling hate in our communities have been for years, a seamlessly hopeless task.

AAANY has been fortunate to build relationships with partners like CAIR-New York under the leadership of sister Affaf Nashar, to be able to provide bystander intervention trainings to tens of thousands of New Yorkers. People like Mr. Catania, creating safe zones for our most vulnerable community members, developing resources and tools to support survivors and more. AAANY is also currently an anchor organization, and Path Forward, a citywide initiative that supports CBOs throughout New York City to develop anti-hate programming and services. Path Forward is a recognition from the mayor's office that this work requires heavy investment if it is to be successful.

Progress has been made, sure, but much more investment is needed to curate the change we also desperately seek. I want to thank the mayor's office for its effort to take on hate, and for recognizing a true New York City hero today. It reflects the mayor's commitment to taking on this challenge and doing whatever it takes to ensure those on the ground have the necessary resources to do the work that is needed.

We need the people, we need the investment, and we need community buy in. Mr. Catania, I want to thank you for your bravery. My heart is broken that you were ever in such a situation to begin with, but I stand in awe for what you did for my sister, Diamond Phillips. As a Muslim, we believe that to save one life is like saving all of humanity. Imagine the gratitude one might have towards someone who saved the world. That is the gratitude we hold for you. Thank you.

Mayor Adams: First, any on topics for any... Yes. Kate, you got it?

Question: If you wouldn't mind just talking about what was going through your mind that day, a little over a month ago when you decided to intervene? Thank you.

Catania: I'll say not much. It was a bit more reactionary than a logical decision. I mean, I saw someone get attacked and it was very violent out of nowhere. And I mean, someone needed to do something and I was standing there. I mean, it fell on my shoulders, I guess. I mean, everyone else kind of jumped away. And I mean, what else do you do? I can't let someone... That situation is just like a moral thing. It had to happen in front of me. There was no real thought about it. It was just I had to help. Simple as that.

Question: When you say other people jumped away, other people were scared of what they were seeing?

Catania: Yeah, I'd say so. I'd say so. She looked very alone and clearly injured in the moment. So I just tried to do my best, tried to intervene and stop any more violence. I'm hoping I could do that. I myself got a little injured, but that's all right.

Mayor Adams: Thank you, thank you. Any others? Would really encourage people as we roll out our Breaking Bread, Building Bonds, a thousand dinners across the city, 10 people at each dinner, and doing something revolutionary. Talking to each other. And we are going to encourage individuals to participate. It's time for the good people of the city to know each other and not allow that scar to define us. We want people to see our face. And so again, thank you. Thank you so much for what you have done, and just continue to be the great person you are and educator that you are. Do a couple of off topics? Yes. You don't want to stay for this. (Laughter.)

Question: Mr. Mayor, where were you on Thursday and Friday?

Mayor Adams: I was in the U.S. Virgin Islands, and it was interesting that after 365 days of working without a day off, sun up to sundown, I was really surprised of your response. I saw a live, the press conference, and I was amazed to see how you responded. This is my second Christmas without my mother. And last year, I was really in a state of depression, and what I put my staff through, and I said, "I can't do that again."

So after 365 days of commitment to this city, I decided to take two days to reflect on mommy. And to watch how you responded to my two days out of this city was really alarming. I deserve good work-life balance like you do. I bet you went on a vacation. I bet you have not worked 365 days in the city. I bet you have not dealt with people being killed, fires, police officers dying, and you probably still have your parents. I don't. And so if I take times off to get my mental capacity together so I could take the city through the crisis, I deserve those two days. And my fellow New Yorkers believe I deserve those two days. Yes.

Question: Sort of apart from, I think most people would not begrudge you taking two days off. I'm curious how you think about what information is owed to New Yorkers about your

whereabouts. Obviously, Bloomberg often went away on weekends and didn't tell people where he was. How do you think about that sort of question?

Mayor Adams: Well, every mayor has traveled away. I deserve private time. I'm a believer of that. I deserve to walk out of a building without a reporter, hiding behind a flower pot, without someone following me. I deserve a moment to really deescalate. And there will be many days that my body and my mind is going to tell me, "Eric, you need to get away." Nowhere in the city charter does it state, I have to report to the New York City press where my whereabouts are, and I'm not going to do that. And I'm not going to apologize for having a mental and physical capacity that's needed to do the second most difficult job in politics in America. All of you who cover me in the press, you know what time my days start, you know what time they end. You tell me another mayor that has had that level of rope that I have. I do my job well and I know what's needed to do that job.

And so when you look at the fact of what this city has gone through all of these days, that all of you covered, both of you and all who else is in this media, you realize how much it took out of any human being. And to take two days to reflect on that, I do a disservice to my team and myself. And the most important thing, last year, the first year mom was not here. I couldn't take off. We were building a team. My team responded to a fire where we lost loved ones. My team responded to a storm. My team responded to the incidents. Before leaving, I responded to a shooting involving a police officer. When I landed that day, I was at the hospital, responding to an officer who was stabbed. When my plane landed, there was a fire at JFK.

When you look at the accumulation of a big city, every day something is happening in this city. So if I put my mental capacity on hold for nothing to happen in this city, I would never have that opportunity to reflect.

(...)

Mayor Adams: No, no. Finish, because if we don't, he's going to...

Question: Mayor. I wasn't criticizing, no one was criticizing taking a vacation. The question was where you were and what would trigger a return. Just 90 miles to the south, the mayor of Philadelphia went, on the same weekend, went under for surgery. There was a major winter storm and they put out a press release advising that he was under for surgery and that he wouldn't be in charge of the response, and that it would be delegated to his deputy. Do you think you owe the public that same level of disclosure, this sort of follow on-

Mayor Adams: Which disclosure? Which disclosure?

Question: That you're going to be out of town, sort of what your whereabouts are, and I guess, over the week that Lorraine Grillo would be overseeing the city storm response.

Mayor Adams: I think what is in part, what we must do is follow the City Charter. The City Charter lays out my responsibility. In my absence, the first deputy mayor is responsible for the city that was in place. You saw my first deputy mayor hold a press conference, giving a complete diagnosis of what was happening in the city. We followed the City Charter. There are things that

I would do that the Mayor of Philadelphia may not do. And so to hold me to what another mayor is doing is not how I'm going to run this city.

I follow the laws and the City Charter. Now, if you find a place in the City Charter that states I'm supposed to announce my whereabouts when I'm out of the city, then I apologize because I didn't follow that rule. I don't know any of that. Maybe you do, I don't. I follow the City Charter and I follow the rules on what's happening. There are going to be days in the future that I'm going to leave without letting you know beforehand. But we will have the right people in place to run a complicated city. But I'm not going to always tell this press where I am to have you sitting outside the location and seeing my every move. I learned enough of that. Okay. Thank you.

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