

Transcript from Sunday, April 17, 2022: Mayor Eric Adams Appears on ABC's "This Week with George Stephanopoulos"

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George Stephanopoulos: We're joined now by your city Mayor Eric Adams, Police Commissioner Keechant Sewell. Thank you both for joining us this morning and Mayor Adams, let me begin with you. Let's begin with the latest on the subway shooting. What more have you learned about Frank James and whether he could have been stopped?

Mayor Eric Adams: It's still under active investigation. Can I thank the commissioner enough for the way she handled the investigation and brought him into apprehension? And so we're still weeded through his history and other parts of this investigation.

Stephanopoulos: And commissioner, so what do we know about why he turned himself in?

Police Commissioner Keechant Sewell, Police Department: So I think the fact that he called and turned himself in is evidenced by the fact that we were kind of closing in around him. There were a number of avenues we pursued to try to locate Mr. James. We disseminated his picture, made the strategic decision to disseminate his picture. And we had a number of people looking for him, hundreds of detectives looking for him. But I think one of the key factors also is our force multiplier, which are the eyes and ears of our incredible New Yorkers. And we were able to bring him into custody.

Stephanopoulos: Mayor Adams, in many ways, Frank James was hiding in plain sight even before the attack. He was arrested several times. He had YouTube videos packed with hate and suggestions of violence. Do we need a better way to track individuals like this before they take this violent action and whose responsibility is that?

Mayor Adams: Yes, I do. I believe we do. I think social media must step up. There's a corporate responsibility. When we are watching hate brew online, we could identify using artificial intelligence and other methods to identify those who are talking about violence. And you know, my concerns around even what's called drill music, not all drill music, but those that talk about inflicting violence on rival gangs that is driving some of the shooters we're seeing in the parts of the Bronx.

Stephanopoulos: Commissioner Sewell, we've seen a spate of crimes in subways over the year. The shooting was just the latest of those. Do we need a more robust police presence to convey people in New York City, actually around the country, that subways are safe?

Commissioner Sewell: The subways have to be safe and they will be safe. Since January, we enhanced patrols on the subway. We've done over 280,000 additional inspections by uniformed personnel in the subway system. Coupled that with our Subway Safety Task Force, as it stands now, crime in the subway is actually below pre COVID numbers. But last week, we graduated more recruits from the police academy and we're surging more officers into the subway system. We recognize that people need to see a visible presence of police in the subway and we're endeavoring to make sure that that happens. There's also security measures that we don't see, but we understand that reassurance is required and we're putting multiple officers in the subways every single day.

Stephanopoulos: Mayor Adams, you promised to focus on crime in your campaign, but major crimes have continued to rise on your watch. How do you explain it? What more can be done?

Mayor Adams: A national problem. I say over and over again, there are many rivers that feed the sea of violence. This is a national issue. It's not a red state, blue state. In fact, red states experience a higher murder rate than blue states. Tulsa is three times the murder rate of Los Angeles. Mississippi, Kentucky, Louisiana, those are the highest murder rates in our entire country. I think the president has done an amazing job, but you've heard the narrative beforehand about defunding the police. Let me tell you what the defunders of police are. Those are those who did not vote on the Build Back Better bill. Money was in that bill for police officers. We have 2,400 ATF agents in our country. Only 80 are in New York. We need to double that amount. We need to go after the ghost guns, we need to put a head to ATF in place, put in place a real gun tracing

program. And then we have to be preventive of many of these generational social problems have become the pipeline to violence. And the only thing that is beating that pipeline is the pipeline of guns that are coming into our inner cities. Big cities are hurting all across America. We're going to do our job. We took 1,800 guns off the street this year, and we know that they continue to flow into our cities all across America.

Stephanopoulos: Commissioner, so what's the biggest challenge facing police right now? Is there a trust problem?

Commissioner Sewell: We work to rebuild trust every single day. We need to work with our communities and we know that. So every single day, we have officers out there, I'm out there rebuilding that trust with the community because we need them. And I think we keep saying that public safety is a shared responsibility. This recent case illustrates just that, and everyone came together. So we need to build strength in our communities with the police.

Stephanopoulos: Finally, Mr. Mayor, the former Police Commissioner Bill Bratton had something to say about this this week on Bloomberg. I want you to listen.

[Audio plays] **Bill Bratton:** The scales right now are tipped very heavily in favor of the reforms of the progressive left, well intended, some needed, but a bit too far. And what we have as a result is this growing fear of crime, this growing actual amount of crime as evidence in almost every major American city.

Stephanopoulos: Is Commissioner Bratton right?

Mayor Adams: Yes, I believe he is right. And he understood what we had to go through during the mid '80s, early '90s, when we had to transform policing. Major mistakes made throughout the years that destroyed the trust that the police commissioner is talking about, we have to rebuild that trust, but we can't rebuild that trust by allowing those who are dangerous and that have, they have a repeated history of violence to continue to be on our streets. We have to un-bottleneck the courts. Too many people during COVID when courts closed down have not served their time or have not been in the courtroom. And then we have to be honest about some of the things we're doing generationally that has created the crime problem that we are facing right now. And that is why we believe in intervention and prevention to solve this issue that we're facing.

Stephanopoulos: Commissioner Sewell, I saw you nodding your head. Do you agree?

Commissioner Sewell: I do agree. We cannot not lose sight of the victims of crime. We believe the system has to be fair and balanced, but when we lose sight of the victims of crime, we are not doing what public safety is intended to do.

Stephanopoulos: Commissioner Sewell, Mayor Adams, thanks for your time this morning.