

Transcript: Mayor Eric Adams Appears Live on MSNBC's "Morning Joe"

June 24, 2022

Joe Scarborough: Let's bring in, right now, New York City Mayor Eric Adams. So Mr. Mayor, you have been fighting some of your own City Council members. You have been fighting people in the state legislature. You have been fighting people all around to try to make New York City safer, try to bring down gun violence. What does the Supreme Court decision do to that task of yours?

Mayor Eric Adams: You could not state it better. We're still analyzing the bill. But one thing is clear, New Yorkers and Americans are less safe based on this ruling. We are connecting this ruling to our historical past with guns without taking into account the current present crisis as well as the endangerment of our future. This is theory colliding with reality. Theoretically, someone could say that law abiding citizens should have a right to carry guns. But my law enforcement and my public life, clearly they have shown me that even law abiding citizens could reach a point where they have a gun to use it incorrectly. We saw it back in the days of Bernie Goetz on the subway system. This is an impact to our city. New York is going to be impacted, probably the largest amount of impact out of any place in this country because of our population.

Willie Geist: Mr. Mayor, good morning. Let's take the Supreme Court argument. Let's take their side of it and just put it to you, which is that crime is up. The subway is a dangerous place, unfortunately, right now for many people and that folks ought to have a right to defend themselves. If the other person on the subway, trying to rob them, has a gun, they ought to be able to defend themselves with a gun too. What do you say to that argument?

Mayor Adams: Well, this is New York City and not Dodge City – and certain parts of the country where you are not as densely populated as New York. I don't think when people hear about New York City and 8.8 million people, congregate settings in our subway system, millions of riders and Times Square, for example – that they clearly stated, we could not blanketly indicate that this has a sensitive location. We had over

350,000 people in Times Square last Monday. This city is a unique place. And if you state any and every one that is a law abiding citizen can carry a gun, that's problematic. A simple traffic dispute, a simple dispute on the subway system. Oftentimes when an untrained individual discharges a weapon, they don't hit the target of the person they're shooting at. Many innocent people are caught in the crossfire of that shooting. And they did not take that into account.

Jonathan Capehart: Mr. Mayor, it's Jonathan Capehart, and I hope to see you on my show on Sunday. Hint. Hint. I want to pick up on some language that Joe pulled out from the decision where it talks about ordinary self-defense means. Black man to Black man, because to hear self-defense in relation to guns makes me very nervous because it's so easy for people to say "I was in fear of my life, therefore I had to shoot this person." That's one part of it.

Capehart: The other part of it is, as a Black man, let's say I have a gun and now you basically don't have to have a permit to have a gun. But let's say I have a gun for self-protection and I use it for self-protection. Will I have the equal treatment under the law to have my right to self-defense be respected? I would love to get your perspective on that aspect of this ruling.

Mayor Adams: Jonathan, you are analyzing this in the manner in which I believe the Supreme Court should have done that. We cannot have so much idealism that we don't acknowledge the realism. Several components to that.

Mayor Adams: Number one, that Black man discharging that gun, the responding law enforcement officers are going to come with the predispositions that historically they have been part of policing in our cities. He better be concerned. Many Black police officers lost their lives due to taking police action while they were in civilian clothing. Then you got to look at those who perceived the threat of a Black and brown person. Trayvon Martin. He felt he was in fear, his shooter felt that he was in – Trayvon was a threat and Trayvon lost his life. There are clear issues that are facing this ruling that can use just the ethnic part of this that is very real. And as Black and brown people who have witnessed overaggressive policing and the victims of shooters and in many of the communities where the illegal guns are at a high number. You find them in those Black and brown communities in our large cities: Chicago, San Francisco, Atlanta, New York. And this is only going to add to the crisis that we have been facing.

Mika Brzezinski: Mayor Adams, as a former cop, give me a sense of how this ruling impacts the daily life of your cops on the streets of New York City.

Mayor Adams: Well, it changed the game. When we looked at the technology we wanted to introduce to define or identify if someone is carrying a gun, now everyone has the potential to be carrying a gun. When you look at how do you distinguish between a legal carry and someone who's carrying it illegally, it is just really challenging. And then responding to the bad days that individuals have in the city, in big cities across America, but they're armed with a weapon. You can see a simple dispute elevate to a shooting. This is a real concern which the Supreme Court put in place. We now must use our pre-existing laws to minimize the danger of the Supreme Court ruling. I am just really surprised that the justices did not acknowledge the present day crisis that we are facing. These are not the days of the six shooters, these are the days of automatic weapons, such as AK-47s. And we just changed the game on the everyday police officer in this country.

Scarborough: Yeah. Your point is so important for people to understand, which is there is theory, there's constitutional theory, and then there's the practical experience of what the cops are having to deal with on the street. I would guess, I'm sure I am wrong, but I would guess that some of those six justices haven't spent a lot of time in New York City to understand things are far different in South Dakota than they are in New York City or in other urban areas where you're right. How many people did you say were in Times Square last week?

Mayor Adams: Over 350,000 people. Now, can you imagine if just a third of them were carrying weapons and got into a dispute? Remember, once one person discharges a weapon in an environment like that, everyone else who's carrying will have the potential thought of pulling out their weapon and discharging it. This is a real concern. There's many rivers that feed the sea of violence. Senate dammed one river, but unfortunately the Supreme Court opened another river.

Scarborough: I will tell you every gun owner I know, gun shop owners, they all want people, if they have guns, to actually know what they're doing with the guns to be trained. Unfortunately, as we saw in Uvalde, as you've seen too often with mass proliferation of guns across America. Too many people are getting guns, not getting the proper training and you're exactly right, it puts all of us in danger. New York City Mayor Eric Adams, thank you so much.

Mayor Adams: Thank you.