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# Transcript: Mayor Eric Adams Calls in Live to Caribbean Power Jam's "The Reset Show"

February 10, 2023

**J.R. Giddings:** Next up, we have the mayor of New York City. Good morning, Mr. Mayor. And how are you?

**Mayor Eric Adams:** Quite well. I don't know if I fit into the icon status, but I'll take it. Any accolades you can get. It was great seeing the congresswoman on The Hill a few days ago during the state of the nation, and they continue to fight on behalf of the city. And her entire New York delegation was extremely helpful when I saw them last year to talk about funding for the migrant situation. They just rallied to the cause and we're receiving some relief and we're going to continue to lean towards them. So, I know she was just on, but I just want to personally thank her for that.

**Giddings:** Well, first, before we get into it and in honor of Black History Month, we salute you, Mayor Adams as the 110th mayor of New York City, and the second Black man to lead this city. We celebrate you.

**Mayor Adams:** Thank you. Thank you. And appreciate that. And sometimes while we are going through the moment, we don't understand that the moment is going to be history one day. I had a visit to the Museum of the City of New York, and as I walked through the museum and looked at the headlines and the articles and the photos, I realized that every step we take, one day my administration is going to be on those walls and people going to say, "Who were you?"

And we have to be extremely careful if we allow our narrative to be defined by those who just don't have our goodwill in mind. That's why these platforms are so important and why we started that initiative of communicating directly with New Yorkers. Because we just can't continue to allow the outside influencers to define the good work we are doing. If you were to pick up the tabloids, you would think this administration didn't have any Ws, didn't have any victories, when it is unprecedented victories that we did last year of everything from N.Y.C.H.A. land trust to dyslexia screening, to making childcare affordable for families, what we have done around public safety, reforms, all of these victories, you don't read and hear about them.

You hear about all of these petty, clickable items. How do we get people to click on our articles so we can have people look and see and read? But no, this is a substantial movement to improve how this city is operating. And I am really pleased about the historical nature. As we talk about history, first time in the history five women are running the city as the deputy mayors. First African American woman to be the First Deputy Mayor, second woman in history to be the chief of staff of the mayor of the City of New York of woman of color. The first one was under David Dinkins. And you know, of course, I'm the one that's going to give the same opportunity, first woman of color to run the New York City Police Department, one of the largest police forces on the globe.

When you start to look and see what we are doing, it is just extremely impressive, important and reflective that we're not just here going through the motions. I think that was one of the biggest mistakes that Mayor Dinkins made. He had too many people around him that didn't have the same vision, had a lot of Ed Koch's people who remained in place and he didn't bring on his team so that they were clear on his vision. And Mayor Dinkins did some amazing things, but there were a lot of his team members that remained on the bench waiting for the next term instead of dealing with the term that we had. And I think it's important for me to focus, I'm here right now, do what I have to do right now.

**Giddings:** Well, Mayor Adams, you just shed some light on the history, more history that's being made coming out of your office. So we applaud you for that.

Two big talking points, and I know I have to get one of my panelists in. Mayor Adams, could you shine some light on the pushback coming from the asylum seekers feeling far removed from services and potential jobs.

**Mayor Adams:** We have to always be crucial by the numerical minority that the press focus on instead of the overwhelming majority that are extremely thankful to New Yorkers for opening their doors. We had a thousand people — close to a thousand people in the hotel in Manhattan — close to a thousand. Everyone was willing because they were single men. And we said to the single men that we need to free up these rooms, which was a temporary location, so that we can get women and children in hotel spaces because we don't want women with children in congregate settings. We do that for everyday New Yorkers.

We have congregate settings for everyday New Yorkers. And so we moved the men out of the setting with hotel rooms and said, this is going to go to women with children, and we are moving you to a congregate setting like we do all the other single adult men in the city. They were willing to do so. A few agitators went there and started yelling and screaming and saying, don't leave, you don't have to leave, defy leaving.

So 40 to 45 of the thousand decided — they said, "We're not going to leave. This is inhumane. We're going to sleep on the streets." Duh. Are you serious? That's not even making any sense. And so those 45 decided to stay on the street. Over 600 went to the location, the H.E.R.R.C. that we had at the Navy Yard. Mind you, the coldest day of the year, I went out there and slept with them. And those men were appreciative. Those men said thank you. We realized what this city is doing, more than anyone else is doing. We just would like to work, we would like to learn English, we would like to participate in this city.

And I support that concept because all of us, no matter who we are, we all came from somewhere. No one is, outside the indigenous people, were here in this country. So everyone should have an opportunity to participate in the pursuit of the American dream. So there's no controversy. It's a created, manufactured controversy based on the excitement of some in the media that they want to give an opinion that we have not been as humane and more humane than any other municipality. Food, shelter,

clothing, educating the children, healthcare, everything that one should be doing, we are doing it and we are doing a damn good job in the process.

**Giddings:** Mayor Adams, what's key, what you just said, you spent a night, you slept over with the asylum seekers. Did I hear correct?

**Mayor Adams:** Yes. Yes you do. You know what I do every Wednesday night, J.R.? Every Wednesday night at 9 p.m. I'm on 34th Street between 7th and 8th Avenue feeding the homeless. Every Wednesday I'm there. I go there at 9 p.m. when I finish up, then I go and do whatever else I have to do in the subway system or visit the hospitals and talk to my nurses and my 24-hour workers. Midnight. This city doesn't close down at five. Many people think it does. But this is a 24/7 city, and I like to see my overnight workers and talk with them. But I say that to say so many people are talking about what we aren't doing. And I keep saying, "What are you doing?" How many people are going to the shelters, speaking to the migrant workers or going to the shelters, speaking to everyday New Yorkers who have fallen on hard times? How many people who are accountants are going to teach financial literacy in our school? Or how many people who work for the Department of Sanitation are going to show people how to deal with the rodent problem in the city?

Everybody should be doing something. I say, if we all just say, I'm just going to take one hour a day, one hour a week, and do something. With 8.5 million people, you know what we can do with one hour a week?

And as Pastor Straker who I see all over the place — no, no, the biblical tithe and offering is 10 percent. Not only of how much money you have, but 10 percent of our lives should go back to doing something for someone other than ourselves. All of us should be volunteering. And all us folks who sit remotely in their penthouses saying what we're doing wrong, come spend the night in the shelter with me, come visit the shelters with me, come in the train station and talk to the homeless with me. Come and go to the senior centers with me. Stop sitting on the sideline talking about what I could have done right. Come and get on the field of battle and show me how to do it right. Since you have all the answers and you're out there.

**Giddings:** Mayor Adams, I've endorsed you and I continue to endorse you. And there was a reason why when I started this platform, I reached out to you. And the one thing that you said to me, "I'm on board with you, J.R." So audience, if you're listening, this is the type of mayor that we have that runs New York City. When you call upon him, he will tell you what he can do. And nine out of 10 times he does it. Mayor Adams, now to a big talking point here. You end the vaccine mandate today. What about the 2,000 employees that were fired? What do they need to know about their jobs?

**Mayor Adams:** Well, they can reapply for their jobs. 96 percent of employees took the mandate, took the vaccine. 96 percent of employees took the vaccine. And listen, this was a tough time. I remember, and those who are here, our nurses and our healthcare professionals, I know what Covid looked like and I know that if we didn't have those mandates, I take my hat off to Bill de Blasio. That was a tough call, 'cause you know New Yorkers, no one wants us... No New Yorker wants anyone telling them anything. The mere fact you tell them, if you tell a New Yorker, "You better take this million dollars." They're going to say, "Why? No, I'm not." That's just who we are. We don't want to be mandated. We don't want anyone to tell us to put on a mask. That's just who we are. So that was a cultural shift in our mindset to say, we're fighting this dangerous virus.

I was at the hospitals, seeing trailers of bodies. I saw the nurses and doctors and hospital employees wearing plastic bags and makeshift face masks, putting themselves in harm's way. I saw the first responders. I was on the ground, remember, I moved into Borough Hall and dealt with that virus,

responding every day on the ground. This was real. If we didn't have that vaccine and we didn't have those mandates, we would have lost so many more lives. And so New York has stepped up. They said, "We don't want to do it. I don't want to get injected. I don't want to do this. This is new." But they stepped up anyway.

And so those who made the determination that, no, I still want to come into a work environment and I'm not going to be vaccinated. No, I want to still ride trains. I want to do whatever I want. That just wasn't right. That wasn't right. And they made a decision and the law was on our side that said we could mandate, and so they were removed. Now that we're seeing a normalization of Covid, there may be another time that we are going to have to do mandates again because these viruses are not going away. We're dealing with a whole new environment of what we are fighting against some of these viruses. They make the decision not to be vaccinated. They lost their jobs. We see the need now to lift the mandate, but those who lost their jobs could reapply for their jobs, but they got to reapply just like everyone else.

**Giddings:** What about pay? Would they get back pay?

**Mayor Adams:** Nope. Nope. Their back pay is the pay they got when they got another job somewhere. I mean, New Yorkers should not be paying for someone that wasn't working. And they made a decision. People made a decision to not take the vaccine when they were supposed to. And now keep in mind, there were some people who applied for city work and were told you have to be vaccinated to get the job. And they took the job with that understanding and still said, "No, I don't want to be vaccinated." So no, no. You have a right to come back and be employed and file for your job again. But no, there's not going to be any back pay. We are going to try to be as fair as possible. We listened to a large number of reasonable accommodations. We bent over backwards to understand the needs that people have.

And the goal was not to be punitive, it was to be protective. We had to protect city workers, first line responders, and deal with the crisis that we were facing. I lost five friends in a short period of time due to Covid, one of them being Roy Hastick, who was my mentor. I lost a rookie cop. She was one of my rookie cops that I trained, a young lady who died from Covid. And so all of us, everyone on this Zoom, can tell you about a death that they saw. I remember Ingrid, my chief advisor who has been with me throughout my political career. I was really concerned about her and what she experienced during Covid, her and her husband and her son. And so this was real. And your healthcare professionals here, you remember those calls we did, J.R., with them, explaining to us what we were facing. This was a very frightening period of time for our city, our country, if not the globe.

**Giddings:** Mayor Adams, you're speaking to everything. And I tell a lot of my associates and friends and I got a lot of pushback on your behalf. And I tell them, come listen. Come here. You get all the facts, all the details when you tune into The Reset. I'm going to pull back for a little bit and I'm going to let Nicole pose a question to the mayor, because the mayor always, always is on the clock.

**Nicole:** Good morning, Mayor Adams. Great to see you again.

**Mayor Adams:** You, too, Nicole. How are you?

**Nicole:** I'm doing well, thank you.

**Mayor Adams:** Good.

**Nicole:** I have a question for you, and J.R. stole my first question that he asked, but the other question I had for you is we know that the city is facing a budget shortfall, and it's another topic that's ripe for a lot

of disinformation and misinformation. And so we appreciate having you here today. And so my question to you is sort of what are your operating principles for managing this budget shortfall?

**Mayor Adams:** And it's real and it's frightening. And I had to make some decisions last year that were painful. But I knew that if we make the right decisions slowly, we would be able to absorb some of the budgetary issues that we're facing. So there are several things that are looming that really keeps me up at night. Number one, the fiscal cliff we're about to hit. The previous administration put in place permanent things with temporary money. The stimulus from the federal government is running out in [2025]. It's gone. And so there are things that we put in place that were supposed to be permanent, that that money is disappearing and we have to now reexamine them.

Second, the Healthcare Stabilization Fund. It's a multi-billion dollars that we have to spend in healthcare on city employees, and we want our city employees to have the best healthcare that's possible. And we're one of the few locales where you get healthcare without any premium payment and we want to maintain that. But some of the changes in the healthcare contracts and the R.F.P.s that went out, we're trying to zero in on that. And if we don't get it right, it's going to cost us billions of dollars. We have \$8 billion that we set aside for a rainy day fund, but it's going to go to that and it's going to go to our union contracts. We have to have real union contracts that's going to pay city employees a livable wage as they deal with the challenges of everything that's increasing, from the cost of housing to food, and we want to make sure they're treated fairly and give them the right contracts.

And then we're getting other mandates that's coming from Washington. The governor put in a proposal that we are to pay \$500 million, a half a billion dollars, a year to the M.T.A. We're already paying \$2 billion. They're not leveraging this on any other municipality, but New York City. And then you look at the asylum seeker crisis, 1.4 billion this fiscal year, 2.8 billion next fiscal year is just not possible. It's not sustainable. And so I want to focus on, number one, what are the bread and butter, kitchen table issues that families need? How do we put money back in their pockets? We were successful with the reduced fare Metrocard. We were successful with the childcare. We were successful in earned income tax credit and showing people the money that's available. So there's a lot of money we got for New Yorkers, now I want to spend the year making sure they get it.

But at the same time, we want to make sure we balance the budget without being harmful to those everyday New Yorkers that are in need. And we have a couple of things that we going to try to do that have never been done before around medical debt and other items that we are focusing on. But we're in a real fiscal challenge. Wall Street, that we receive a large amount of our tax revenue for, is having a terrible year. And that's going to impact our bottom line. And so there are real challenges, but we made some smart decisions in the beginning of the year where we looked at how to stream in our spending and it's paying off now, but we are going to need help from the state and federal government.

**Nicole:** Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Mayor. And let me take an opportunity to just thank you for your leadership. There's a lot of tough challenges, and many are called, but you're called and you are also chosen. So we appreciate all that you do.

**Mayor Adams:** Thank you very much. I feel like, Esther — God made me for such a time like this. Reverend Straker.

**Giddings:** Pastor Straker, your question for the mayor.

**Pastor Louis Straker, Jr.:** Well, yes sir. I do believe you have been brought to the Kingdom of New York for such a time as this. I really thank you for your leadership. Also want to let the listeners know, on

Caribbean Power Jam, that the mayor really cares about the Caribbean community. He recently formed a Caribbean advisory council that's seeking to hear the needs of our Caribbean community. And I want to applaud you for that. Mr. Mayor. Always on top of everything.

I've got a quick question for you. Well actually, I have a number of questions, but I'll narrow it down just to one. And I'm looking at the city and what's happening with these smoke shops. It almost appears we're becoming a city of smoke shops. And I know that you have some concerns about these illegal smoke shops that are popping up, and I think I heard you speak about some restrictions in the law that prohibits the police officers to go in in certain situations. This is a public safety issue. As crime may continue to escalate, what do you have to say about, and what can be done about, these smoke shops that are just popping up all over the city?

**Mayor Adams:** And you are so right. And I always have to check myself because I'm a little old-fashioned, and I know everybody's modern now, and I'm just not that modern. I just didn't grow up in the atmosphere where any and everything goes. There were just guardrails on my behavior. Now I'm not going to tell you I wasn't mischievous, but mom was clear, that belt was always on the back of the door. And I knew, when her five-foot four stature, that you better not mess with her. And I think the over proliferation of smoke shops, of what we're just seeing in our city and country, is just the erosion of the basic principles that are important of raising healthy children, that they can raise healthy families.

And we sent the wrong message, and I was criticized on the campaign trail when I said, "Listen, if we're going to legalize cannabis, and we should have, because it was too much criminalizing people for having small quantities, we need to deal with a real understanding." We can't just say, "Hey, it's legal" and tell children, "Just go roll a joint on your way to school, smoke a joint, sit in a classroom, drive with being under influence." There has to be some real parameters, education, and I don't believe the legislation was done correctly, and that's why you see so many illegal smoke shops opening. Because you may read the full paragraph in the paper, but half the people just read the headline, "Cannabis is Legal." So now they just want to open a smoke shop anywhere and you don't know what's being sold. Some of it is laced with different items that are being sold. Those who are part of the legal cannabis must go through several layers of testing, they must be part of the legacy project, those who were victimized because of over-policing, heavy-handed policing, are getting benefits from that.

And so we must now fix what I believe the law was attempting to do, but did not follow all the details closely. And you're right, police cannot walk into a shop, see someone selling it and take necessary action. So we built a task force with the sheriff, police, and the Department of Consumer and Workers Protection, so that we can go in and zero in on these shops. We have around about 1,800 shops that are opening now that we are focusing on. The D.A. has partnered with us, that we are now going to go after eviction, the people ignore them, but as you said, pastor, these shops are creating crime. We're getting an increase in robberies of these smoke shops because they are a cash business. You can't use a credit card or check because the federal government has not legalized marijuana or cannabis. So people are going in robbing these shops and it's just really adding to the aggravation of how do we continue to keep our city safe? So we want to zero in on them. I think they're a problem. I think we need to do some real education.

I don't want my children over consuming marijuana or cannabis, just like they shouldn't be over consuming alcohol. We need to be clear of how did this impact our community. They're shops, these illegal shops, they're selling candy-looking items that are edible. They're targeting young people with flavored items, gummy bears, Skittles, all of these items. You will not be able to tell the difference between a package of Skittles and a cannabis-laced package of Skittles. So we need to zero in. Some of

the tests that we've done, they have sold to young people who have walked in and purchased. So we've been going after them, but we want a broader, more coordinated effort to do so.

**Giddings:** Mr. Mayor, is there a restriction on these shops near schools or churches?

**Mayor Adams:** Yes, the legal ones. The illegal ones are not supposed to be near anything, they're not supposed to be open. So we have to zero in on those illegal ones. The legal ones, they are real restrictions.

As we talk about cannabis, there's another issue that is lingering out there, and I'm pretty sure our healthcare professionals could even explain even in detail. Heroin decimated our inner cities in the country.

Heroin during the '60s and the '70s, crack cocaine during the '80s. Fentanyl is the heroin and crack cocaine crises combined. If we don't wrap our heads around fentanyl, you are going to see our communities decimated. That fentanyl is so dangerous and it's laced with everything, and we cannot ignore the increased number and overdoses, how fentanyl is being used. This is a dangerous, dangerous drug. And the real danger, I was down in Washington speaking to the Customs and Border Patrol, that many of the cartels have now become manufacturers, and they're manufacturing large quantities of fentanyl. It's being manufactured in the city. We must get a grip on fentanyl. If we don't, what happened with heroin and crack cocaine is going to look like a walk in the park in comparison to fentanyl.

**Giddings:** Wow. Mr. Mayor, always remember that if you want to get the message out, you built this platform, you come to this platform and you put the message out there, because the audience need to know, we need to educate them. Like you said, everyone read the headlines. They see you on C.N.N., it's only five minutes. When you're on The Reset, you break it all down, they get all the details, all the briefings. So this is your platform. You'll always get a chance to put forth your message, and we're always happy to have you.

But before you leave, we want to offer our condolences about Officer Fayaz who was killed off duty. I know he's one of your officers, and I think we as a city, we have to come together, so we offer our condolences.

**Mayor Adams:** Terrible situation, a young man, two children, lovely wife, lovely family. Two of his cousins were police officers. Always wanted to be a police officer. They said when he was a little child, he would talk about one day he was going to be a police officer. He honored and looked up to his cousins who served. And it's just a terrible, terrible, senseless of violence of how this individual just shot him in his head. And as any of us, we go to purchase a car, we go to do some form of errand, who would've thought this level of violence? And my heart goes out to his family.

That's when I talk about we could have justice and safety. They can coexist. They cannot exist alone. We cannot have safety. And in the Memphis incident that we witnessed without justice, we need both. And I just refuse to be part of the voices who state we could only have one or the other. We could have justice and safety, and in fact, we need justice and safety. That's what I committed my life to and I'm going to continue to do that. But I thank you for acknowledging the loss of that young officer, a young officer in the prime of his life. He passed the sergeant's exam, so he was likely to be promoted, and we lost that young man.

My heart goes out anytime. I've been in the hospitals far too many times, watching mothers in so much pain. I spoke to a mother who lost her young son to a stabbing the other day. You never get used to it,

and a part of me dies every time I walk into those hospitals, every time I speak to a parent, a loved one. These babies are dying. More and more are creating the violence, and more and more are the victims of the violence. And that's why we want to make sure we grab them before they get involved in the violent act.

**Giddings:** Thank you, Mr. Mayor.

**Mayor Adams:** Bless you all.

**Giddings:** Again, we honor you for Black History Month.

**Mayor Adams:** Thank you.

**Giddings:** Enjoy your day.

**Mayor Adams:** Take care.

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