

Adams leads NYC mayoral race, two upstate New York incumbents ousted

Patrick Martin**23 June 2021**

Brooklyn Borough President Eric Adams, a former police captain, had a sizeable lead in ballots cast Tuesday in the Democratic primary for mayor of New York City, but final results will not be known for nearly a month because of delays in counting mail ballots and the city's newly adopted system of ranked-choice voting.

Adams had 31.7 percent of the election-day and early voting, compared to 22.3 percent for Maya Wiley, former counsel for outgoing Mayor Bill de Blasio. Wiley is the choice of pseudo-left figures like Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez. Kathryn Garcia, who was sanitation commissioner under de Blasio and had the editorial backing of the *New York Times* and *Daily News*, won 19.5 percent of the vote.

Andrew Yang, a candidate for the Democratic presidential nomination in 2020, finished fourth with 11.7 percent. He immediately conceded. In the last weekend before the primary, Yang campaigned with Garcia and urged his supporters to mark her second on their ballots.

The remaining four Democrats with significant financial or organizational support all trailed far behind: former City Comptroller Scott Stringer with 5.0 percent, non-profit executive Dianne Morales with 2.8 percent, hedge fund investor Raymond McGuire with 2.3 percent, and former Obama cabinet official Shaun Donovan with 2.2 percent.

Adams, who is African American, sought to capitalize on his impoverished upbringing and his role as an opponent within the New York Police Department of some of the most egregious police abuses. At the same time, he cashed in on the support of real estate interests, most trade unions, including Transport Workers Union Local 100, and the bulk of the Democratic Party organization.

The geographical breakdown of the vote showed each of the top three candidates leading in distinct areas. Adams placed first in nearly all the poorest election districts of Brooklyn, Queens and the Bronx, where the bulk of working class New Yorkers live.

Wiley, also African American, ran first in the parts of Brooklyn and Queens closest to Manhattan, which have been heavily gentrified and are populated by more upscale

residents, both minority and white. She and her husband are both multimillionaires. She is a lawyer and he is an investor.

Garcia ran first in most of Manhattan, particularly the wealthier areas, where the editorial support of the *Times* would carry some weight.

Under the ranked-choice system, voters could select up to five candidates. Lower-ranking candidates will be eliminated, starting at the bottom, and their votes redistributed to the next candidate on each voter's ballot. It is possible, though comparatively rare, for a second- or third-place candidate in ranked-choice voting to overtake the election day leader as ballots are redistributed.

According to CNBC, Adams actually trailed Wiley and Garcia when second, third and fourth choices were included. It is thus mathematically possible, although unlikely, that Wiley or Garcia could overtake Adams once all votes are tallied and redistributed.

Despite claims by its advocates that ranked-choice voting makes the political system more democratic, the mayoral campaign was conducted within the framework of the corporate-controlled two-party system, which in New York City is, in effect, a one-party system.

There was virtually no way for the concerns of working people to be articulated in the mayoral campaign. Adams, while promoted by the Democratic Party apparatus as a representative of the poor and an opponent of police violence, was the most heavily funded of all the candidates, in a primary campaign that cost a total of \$100 million. He collected the most in campaign contributions from business interests and from the major unions.

Besides his close alignment with the real estate industry, Adams is tied to the charter school industry. A charter school official chaired the super PAC backing his campaign, and three wealthy hedge fund investors who back charter schools pumped nearly \$2 million into that super PAC: Kenneth Griffin, Stanley Druckenmiller and Paul Tudor Jones.

After a career of more than 20 years in the New York transit police and New York Police Department, in which he

co-founded the association of black police officers, Adams went into electoral politics, winning a Democratic seat in the New York state Senate, and then the largely ceremonial position of Brooklyn borough president, which he has held the last eight years.

He spoke often of his humble beginnings and how, as a teenager, he was beaten by police. According to a profile in the *New York Times*, he joined the police force at the urging of Rev. Herbert Daughtry, founder of the National Black United Front, a prominent preacher and black nationalist. “Some of us needed to work outside of the system, and some inside the system,” Daughtry reportedly told him.

Actually, of course, both were working “inside the system,” and particularly inside the Democratic Party, the oldest capitalist party in America. Daughtry was later an aide to Jesse Jackson Jr. in his campaigns for the Democratic presidential nomination. His daughter Leah Daughtry was CEO of both the 2008 and 2016 Democratic national conventions.

Some 3.76 million people in New York City are registered Democrats and thus eligible to vote in the primary contest. City officials said that 798,000 votes were counted Tuesday night, including both early votes and votes cast on Election Day. As many as 200,000 mail ballots may have been submitted. Votes postmarked June 22 will be counted as long as they are received by June 29.

It is thus likely that fewer than 1 million people, out of 5.6 million eligible voters, chose the next mayor of New York. Even that figure, up significantly from the 646,000 who took part in the last contested primary, in 2013, would represent only 26.6 percent of registered Democrats. It is only 17.8 percent of all voters.

The first results of the ranked-choice process will be released June 29, but these could be substantially altered as the mail ballots begin to be counted. The process of eliminating candidates cannot begin until the final tally of all votes is available, and some press reports suggest that the entire process will not be completed until July 13, or even July 20.

In upstate New York, the results of mayoral primary elections in Buffalo and Rochester, the state’s second- and third-largest cities, were announced within hours of Tuesday’s balloting, and in both cases entrenched incumbent mayors identified as defenders of police brutality were thrown out of office.

The clearest popular repudiation of police violence came in Buffalo, where four-term mayor Byron Brown was defeated in the Democratic primary by India Walton, an affordable housing advocate and former nurse. She ran with the support of the Democratic Socialists of America and financial backing from the Working Families Party, a third

party set up by sections of the union bureaucracy and the pseudo-left that frequently endorses Democrats.

Walton had a 54-46 percent margin over Brown, although the mayor refused to concede, citing uncounted absentee ballots that would have to be cast nearly 100 percent in his favor to overcome Walton’s lead of about 1,500 votes. Both candidates are African American.

Brown, a close ally of Governor Andrew Cuomo and a past chairman of the state Democratic Party, backed by local business and unions, took his reelection for granted. He refused to debate Walton, who attacked his handling of the coronavirus pandemic and the crackdown against last year’s protests over the police killing of George Floyd, in which she participated.

Buffalo police brutality was put in the spotlight during those protests when they were filmed knocking down a 75-year-old peace activist outside City Hall, then stepping over his prone body. Martin Gugino spent a month in the hospital. After two cops were charged with assault, all 57 members of the police special response unit resigned. The charges were later dropped.

Given that there is no Republican nominee for mayor of Buffalo, Brown could still choose to run an independent campaign in the fall, so Walton’s election is not assured.

In Rochester, City Council member Malik Evans defeated incumbent Lovely Warren by a landslide of 66-34 percent. As in Buffalo, both candidates were African American.

Warren was identified with the suffocation murder of Daniel Prude, a homeless black man who was held down naked, handcuffed and hooded, by seven cops. When video of the March 2020 killing emerged in September 2020, the city’s police chief was forced to resign.

Evans benefited not only from the popular revulsion over the killing of Prude, but from the virtual self-destruction of Warren’s reelection campaign. In the months before the primary, the mayor was indicted on campaign finance violations, and her husband was arrested on drugs and weapons charges.



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