

New York Times hails Eric Adams' election victory as a "watershed" for black political power

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Eric Adams, the Democratic candidate and presumptive victor in next November's election for mayor of New York City, has been enjoying a honeymoon of sorts in the last 10 days, toasted by the mainstream media and Democratic politicians since he was declared the winner of the crowded primary.

Adams, the ex-police officer who centered his campaign on the claim that he would uphold law and order while curbing police abuse, has been hailed as a voice of moderation and reason. He was the most prominent guest among other mayors as well as police chiefs at a July 12 meeting with President Biden in the White House to discuss gun violence. Current New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio was not invited.

The White House meeting was followed on Wednesday by a news conference with New York's Democratic Governor Andrew Cuomo. Once again, the theme was "public safety." The media contrasted the smiles of Cuomo and Adams to the notorious feud between Cuomo and de Blasio.

The praise and attention Adams has been receiving goes beyond the usual congratulations to a successful candidate. The ruling establishment is using Adams to drive Democratic Party politics further to the right. Amidst the ongoing COVID crisis and the economic and social misery afflicting millions as inequality soars with every passing day, the main response of the ruling class is the preparation for repression.

Now the *New York Times*, which had endorsed one of Adams's Democratic opponents, former Sanitation Commissioner Kathryn Garcia, has joined in the tributes to the primary victor.

"Eric Adams' win is a 'watershed moment' for black leaders in New York," the front-page headline declares. It goes on in an awestruck tone to point to the victory of Alvin Bragg in the primary for Manhattan district attorney; the primary win of the current public advocate, also African-American; black Democrats who have won two New York

City congressional seats in the past year; and the fact that the current New York state attorney general, the State Senate majority leader and the state Assembly speaker are all African-American.

Adams is a right-wing capitalist politician. He is not only a former policeman, he was also a Republican for a period that overlapped with the Republican mayoralty of the Rudy Giuliani, the man who presided at the time of the notorious brutalization of Abner Louima and who is currently Trump's lawyer.

Adams is also a backer of charter schools, one of the main weapons directed against public education. His campaign was financed overwhelmingly by big business, including major real estate developers and multimillionaires who have also backed Trump. Adams even offered a qualified defense of the infamous "stop-and-frisk" tactic used by the police.

The only daily New York City paper that supported Adams in the primary was the right-wing *New York Post*, which hailed the candidate's stand on law and order. The Murdoch-owned *Post* recognized that Adams could be useful, in part, because his pro-police appeal could attract support beyond the usual right-wing circles.

Now the *Times* is rushing to get on the Adams band wagon, but with an identity politics twist. Its emphasis is on the skin color of Adams and others, not the candidate's program. This only demonstrates that little separates the politics of law and order from the racial politics and black nationalism increasingly promoted by the *Times* and broad sections of the ruling elite.

The *Times* approvingly quotes Adams speaking at Al Sharpton's National Action Network headquarters. "If you don't sit back and rejoice in this moment, shame on you," said Adams. He added, "One of your own is going to move to become the mayor of the most important city in the most important country on the globe."

The *Times* admits that many US cities have elected black mayors. "Diversity" within the political establishment is no

longer new.

The claim that black mayors and other officials can improve the lives of any section of the working class—black, white, Hispanic or immigrant—is not only a lie. It is an old lie, one that has been exposed time and time again over the past half-century, most recently in the course of the eight years of Barack Obama’s presidency.

In 1967, Richard Hatcher and Louis Stokes were elected mayor of Gary, Indiana and Cleveland, Ohio, respectively. In the next few decades they were followed by Coleman Young in Detroit, Tom Bradley in Los Angeles, Harold Washington in Chicago, David Dinkins in New York, Wilson Goode in Philadelphia and many others. Today, African-American mayors, including black women, as the *Times* itself notes, are no longer news.

What have these officials done for their constituents, regardless of skin color? They have presided over deindustrialization, growing poverty, mass incarceration, today’s COVID pandemic, homelessness, the epidemic of death from opioid overdoses, and every other consequence of the capitalist economic and social crisis. They have been no different in this respect from their white counterparts.

When then-Senator Joe Biden played a key role in the passage of the draconian 1994 crime bill, African-American mayors and other officials supported it.

The buildup for Eric Adams is an effort to obscure this historical record. To the extent there is a difference between Adams and some of his predecessors, it is that the future mayor of the most populous city in the country wastes little time promising a better life. His references to the social crisis and the consequences of the pandemic are vague. He has nothing to say about the billionaires who have continued to bleed the city dry, amassing fortunes that would have been unthinkable even 20 years ago, while evictions, homelessness and the destruction of hundreds of thousands of jobs in hotels, restaurants and other service sectors continue to spread misery.

In fact, the buildup of Adams is less about sowing illusions within the working class and more about building up a reliable right-wing constituency for the Democrats. Despite all the attention devoted to the selection of a successor to Bill de Blasio, and the presence of eight major candidates, four of whom were African-American, less than 25 percent of registered Democrats cast ballots.

This electorate was more conservative and middle class. It is this layer to which the *Times* refers when it writes that Adams and the others “underscore the central role Black voters play both in city politics and in the national Democratic Party...”

From the 1930s New Deal through the 1970s, black voters were considered to represent the left wing of the Democratic

constituency, with connections to the industrial labor movement and the struggle for civil rights. Today, the 58-member Congressional Black Caucus is a bulwark of support for the “moderates” within this ruling class party.

Another motive in the hype of Adams is an effort to put the pseudo-left wing of the Democrats in its place. Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez endorsed Maya Wiley, the former chief counsel to de Blasio, in the primary. Of course, the political establishment does not fear AOC. On the contrary, she is an important part of the Democratic “coalition.” Some of the youthful supporters of the pseudo-left, however, are another matter. They must be told in no uncertain terms that inequality is here to stay, and that even hollow “socialist” phrases will not be tolerated.

Eric Adams’ narrow primary win was in part an expression of disgust with de Blasio, who entered City Hall almost eight years ago with promises to reverse the inequality that had made New York “a tale of two cities,” as he put it. Instead, inequality soared, both before the pandemic and even more grotesquely during it. Both of Adams’ main rivals, Garcia and Wiley, served in the outgoing administration.

The aura of success surrounding Adams will not last long. He will take up where de Blasio left off. He has no answers to the COVID-19 crisis, which is seeing a new eruption of cases with the Delta variant, or to the economic crisis that has been triggered and deepened by the pandemic. The health crisis, poverty, homelessness, evictions, as well as the problem of gun violence, cannot be answered without going to the root causes in the decay of the capitalist system. The solution lies in the unity of the working class—black, white, Hispanic and immigrant—in the fight for genuine socialism.



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