

Corporate-backed Democrat Eric Adams wins NYC mayoral election

Sandy English
8 November 2021

A *New York Times* editorial last week on the outcome of the 2021 midterm elections has affirmed the demands of the party's leadership for a rightward turn that will escalate its use of the politics of race and gender to silence any reference to the class struggle, the Trump coup of January 6, or to the massive social crisis brought on by the pandemic, and any "left" attempts to defund the police, as the WSWWS has noted.

The *Times* might also have added that the election on Tuesday of Eric Adams as the next mayor of New York City exemplifies the sort of politician and the sort of policies that are necessary to deal with an increasingly angry and impoverished working class, particularly in America's largest city. Adams, who will be the second African American mayor of New York, is openly hostile to the so-called left-wing of the party and, as a former police captain, devoted to maintaining and strengthening the police apparatus. Despite occasional social demagoguery, he makes no secret of his goal to make life safe and profitable for the super-rich.

Adams, who started political life as a Republican, is a former state senator and current Brooklyn borough president. He won the Democratic primary in June over six other candidates. On Tuesday, as expected, he beat the Republican challenger, right-wing radio host and founder of the vigilante Guardian Angels, Curtis Sliwa.

Both the city's Democratic primary and the general election were conducted in an unreal atmosphere dominated by media-manufactured law-and-order hysteria and excluding almost all discussion of the issues raised by the pandemic: the low vaccination rate among the poorest New Yorkers, the rising infections among children who had been forced back into school buildings, increasing homelessness and an unemployment rate of over 8 percent. No candidate discussed the need to suppress the pandemic or even to take measures to adequately protect the population from the spread of the disease.

The conduct of the outgoing mayor, the onetime "progressive" Bill de Blasio, during the pandemic has been entirely dictated by the needs of big business: he has systematically opened schools and businesses and has sought to push workers back to their jobs while claiming that vaccination alone would protect them. De Blasio demonstrated that he was

a pliant servant of Wall Street throughout his two terms in office, and, as a result, homelessness has skyrocketed, schools have become more crowded, and rents have soared.

But despite this, Wall Street has considered him in the aftermath of the disaster at the Rikers Island prison complex and his vacillations in the face of police murders such as that of Eric Garner in 2014, as well as his occasional use of the term "inequality" to describe social life in New York City, with a certain amount of suspicion.

What is significant in Eric Adams for the city's billionaires, and consequently for the Democratic Party's leadership in the aftermath of the debacle of November 3, is that he has made his orientation to the richest New Yorkers direct and open.

At a conference in September sponsored by the Skybridge investment firm, Adams told the audience, "New York will no longer be anti-business," and added, "This is going to be a place where we welcome business and not turn it into the dysfunctional city that we have been for so many years."

Adams presented a six-point plan that included tax incentives and building zoning changes to attract investment to the city. Praise for his plans came from Kathryn Wylde, the CEO of the Partnership for New York City, one of the city's key employer organizations, who remarked, "That has not been typical—I won't say just of de Blasio—it's not been typical of public programs, they usually are siloed."

A linchpin in this plan is to use the police to suppress visible manifestations of the inequality that has become more apparent in New York's streets in the last 20 months, with masses of homeless people sleeping rough in central business locations such as Times Square and on the subway.

The *Wall Street Journal* also interviewed Adams in September while he was on a trip to Florida to woo back rich New Yorkers who had moved there during the pandemic—those who were, he told the *Journal*, "Among the 65,000 New Yorkers who pay 51% of our income tax," adding, "I don't blame them for leaving. New York has become too violent, too bureaucratic, too expensive to do business."

During the campaign, Adams raised nearly \$8 million, traveling to high-end residential enclaves of the ultra-rich such as the Hamptons on Long Island and Martha's Vineyard in Massachusetts to fundraise. His donors include Laurie Tisch,

the Loews Corporation heiress and her brother Steve Tisch, chairman of the New York Giants, as well as the real estate magnates of the Rudin family.

Both the Tisches and the Rudins played a central role in stabilizing the city's finances after near-bankruptcy in 1975 by forcing wide-ranging spending cuts with the help of the unions.

These ultra-rich families directed, especially with the help of Republican then-mayor Rudolf Giuliani, in the 1990s, but also with his Democratic predecessor David Dinkins, the remaking of Manhattan into an island of luxury housing and services for high net worth and ultra-high net worth individuals. The recipients of this largesse, such as hedge fund managers like John Griffin of Blue Ridge Capital and Lee Ainslie of Maverick Ventures, also funded the Adams campaign.

Notably, Adams has cultivated a close relationship with the city's former mayor and multibillionaire, Michael Bloomberg, who has held fundraisers and rallied the city's ultra-wealthy elite behind Adams. The *New York Times* noted that one of Bloomberg's top advisers and former deputy mayor, Howard Wolfson, met with David C. Banks, one of Adams's choices for schools chancellor.

Adams's schools policy will undoubtedly emulate Bloomberg's, with massive support given to the privatization of education in the form of support for charter schools. He has said that he will not "use the type of school as a definition of what system we want. It doesn't matter to me if it's a private, religious, charter or district school."

Adams also met with the right-wing media kingpin Rupert Murdoch over dinner earlier this year. Murdoch's tabloid rag, the *New York Post* was notably soft on Adams during the election campaign, even headlining his victory as bringing "glamour and gravitas back to Gracie Mansion," the official mayoral residence. The article emphasized that Adams will be no Bill de Blasio, with his "tale of two cities."

Adams has emphasized his opposition to the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) wing of the Democratic Party. Misidentifying the faction, which includes Representatives Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Jamal Bowman, as anti-capitalist, he said in the summer on HBO's *Real Time with Bill Maher*: "This is not a socialist country, let's be clear on that," and added, "we see what's happening in America. We see the demonization of public safety, which I believe is the prerequisite to prosperity. We see the demonization of those who are high-income earners."

At a fundraiser in Queens around the same time he told the audience, "I'm no longer running against candidates. I'm running against a movement. All across the country, the DSA socialists are mobilizing to stop Eric Adams. They realize that if I'm successful, we're going to start the process of regaining control of our cities."

By "regaining control" what Adams means is that he will oppose any attempt to defund or limit the powers of the police, a staple call of the DSA after the George Floyd protests of July

2020. Adams has called instead for an increase in police powers, including searches for guns at New York's Port Authority facilities which include the large transportation hub near Times Square.

He has also announced that he supports a return to an "appropriate" use of "stop-and-frisk," which, under Michael Bloomberg violated the rights of over a million working class youth.

The ruling elite couldn't agree more. A colleague of Kathryn Wylde's from the right-wing Manhattan Institute, Jason L. Riley, remarked approvingly in the *Wall Street Journal*: "[Adams] opposes reducing police resources and blaming cops for larger social problems that are outside their control. He has promised a return to proactive police tactics that have worked in the past—including the lawful use of stop-and-frisk."

It should come as no surprise that an openly pro-capitalist candidate like Adams has the wholehearted support of the trade unions, which are unshakably committed to defending big business from the working class.

The Hotel Trades Council, Service Employees International Union, Local 32BJ, whose membership is made up tens of thousands of building workers, including custodians and doormen, and AFSCME District Council 37, which has a membership of over 150,000 non-uniformed city workers, all endorsed him in March. The firefighters and Emergency Medical Technicians unions endorsed Adams as well. The president of 32BJ, Kyle Bragg and Rich Maroko, president of the Hotel Trades Council, are members of Adams mayoral transition team.

Adams, whose administration will be facing budget shortfalls of at least \$5 billion from 2023 to 2025 has already called for a hiring freeze for city workers. The Adams administration will begin negotiations with many city unions next year.

Mayor Adams will be called upon to make the most vicious attacks on the working class. The city is over \$100 billion in debt, and that can only be reduced by an attack on living standards, particularly those of city workers, and on the remaining social programs that serve the poorest New Yorkers. Already on Sunday, Adams announced that once he is mayor in January, he would rescind the mask mandate in New York's public schools, eliminating the one remaining mitigation measure to protect students and educators.

These attacks, and the ongoing health crisis, poverty, homelessness, evictions, and overall decay of capitalism manifested in every facet of life in New York City, will spur massive conflicts between the working class and the incoming Democratic Party administration.



To contact the WSW and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact