

Tanya Domi:

Hello, this is Tanya Domi. Welcome to The Thought Project recorded at the CUNY Graduate Center. In this space, we talk with faculty and doctoral students about the big thinking and big ideas, generating groundbreaking research, assisting New Yorkers, and informing the world.

Tanya Domi:

Eric Adams is the second Black mayor elected to lead New York City during a very challenging period in the city that is still grappling with the COVID-19 pandemic. Also, a return of crime that has shaken many New Yorkers that feels more like a déjà vu to the troubled past. This pandemic economy has also shaken the economy of the city with tourism down and many office workers continue to remain at home. This is indeed a difficult time, not only here in New York City, but also more broadly for American society.

Tanya Domi:

The perfect guest to discuss these issues and more is CUNY Graduate Center distinguished professor, John Mollenkopf. And there could not be a better commentator to discuss the first six months of Mayor Eric Adams' administration.

Tanya Domi:

Professor Mollenkopf teaches political science and sociology at the CUNY Graduate Center where he also directs its Center for Urban Research and chairs the public policy subfield in political science. His teaching and research interests focus on urban politics and public policy, using New York City as a case study in comparison with similar large cities in the United States and Europe to understand urban political mobilization, immigrant political incorporation, and the formation of governing coalitions. This work seeks to understand how urban policy decisions are made and what consequences they have for different groups and interests, particularly new immigrant groups.

Tanya Domi:

He has authored or edited 18 books on these subjects, more recently *Unsettled Americans: Metropolitan Context and Civic Leadership for Immigrant Integration*, Cornell University Press, 2016, co-edited with Manual Pastor. He also co-edited *Bringing Outsiders In: Transatlantic Perspectives on Immigrant Political Incorporation*, also Cornell University Press, 2009, with Jennifer Hochschild. His 2010 book with Philip Kasinitz, Mary Waters, and Jennifer Holdaway, *Inheriting the City: The Children of Immigrants Come of Age*, a paperback by Russell Sage Foundation, 2010, won the Distinguished Book Award of the American Sociological Association, the Thomas and Znaniecki Award of the ASA Immigration Section, and the Mirra Komarovsky Award of the Eastern Sociological Society. His *Place Matters: a Metropolitica for the 21st Century* with Peter Dreier and Todd Swanstrom, University Press of Kansas, now in its third edition, 2014, won the Michael Harrington Award from the American Political Science Association.

Tanya Domi:

So here we are, and joining us today is a distinguished professor, John Mollenkopf, a political scientist and guru of New York City politics. We're excited to have you today, John. And Eric Adams really walked into a mess, did he not?

John Mollenkopf:

No doubt. It's a hugely difficult situation on many fronts, economic, health wise, the level of distress in many communities, the loss of life, the questioning of the viability of the future of the city, all of these were in his lap.

Tanya Domi:

Yes. And without federal funds, it might have been much worse for New York City, especially keeping people in their housing through rent supplements, but that assistance has now evaporated and ended. And Adams is facing one of the most difficult housing situations as well in the history of the city. And it is ridden with extensive crime, lots of violent crime. And he vowed on coming into the job that he was going to be tough on crime and he was going to address gun violence. Yet violence dominates the headlines and the TV reporting about the city, and actually of many, many victims. What are your thoughts about how people feel about being in the city now, and you yourself have done some survey research on this.

John Mollenkopf:

Well, there's no doubt about the fact there's widespread feeling in New York City that public spaces have become less enjoyable, more insecure, even more threatening. And not simply from violent crime, but from traffic that seems ungoverned from electric bicycle delivery people that shoot through all the stop signs and seem to be following no rules too.

Tanya Domi:

Indeed.

John Mollenkopf:

People acting up on the sidewalks too, people with mental illnesses wandering around. And even if they may not be threatening in a physical sense, they can be very disturbing. The sense of order in public space has come unraveled in various different ways, I think is very widespread. Along with the housing pressures that you mentioned, stayed for a little while by the federal assistance, but in a deeper sense, the affordability crisis has always been quite widespread and it's only getting more so I think in recent months in the crisis.

Tanya Domi:

Yeah, I think it's accentuated in the most recent rental board, the landlords voted to raise rents for even rent stabilized apartments. So this is a really tough situation. I've actually been reading about housing affordability across the country. And in a city like New York, it's even more accentuated and people are even leaving the country. They're moving to Europe because of affordability issues.

Tanya Domi:

What are your thoughts about the future of the city on this count, on the issue of housing? And you also have mentioned the homelessness problem, which seems now to be very present. It seems to be everywhere in the city.

John Mollenkopf:

Well, homelessness has many different roots and dynamics involved with it. So it's not a simple problem to solve, even though we obviously need to build more affordable housing in New York City, building

more affordable housing in and of itself is not going to solve the homeless problem because it reflects also lack of employment, family distress, mental illness, drug abuse-

Tanya Domi:

Agreed. I agree, yeah.

John Mollenkopf:

... and just the tensions within families over the COVID crisis of the last three years cut across the board. Imagine being a parent with kids at home all the time, trying to work at the same time, just many more intense pressures inside households than there were in the past. And I'm sure that contributes to it also where there are multi-generational families that get in conflict with each other and that can lead to homelessness also.

Tanya Domi:

Absolutely. I mean, I'm sure mental illness and drug addiction are big factors in homelessness. Poverty, obviously.

John Mollenkopf:

Can I loop back to something-

Tanya Domi:

Please. Please.

John Mollenkopf:

... else though, related to that.

Tanya Domi:

Please.

John Mollenkopf:

And then, I think that there's been an unanticipated neighborhood effect of COVID that relates to your mentioning of housing pricing, rent increases, and so forth. So people are not going to central business district office buildings nearly at the rate that they had been in January of 2020 before things broke, much more working from home.

John Mollenkopf:

New York City is full of... Actually, very nice neighborhoods where people like to live. And in a sense, the premium on a nice neighborhood in which you can live and work, they become more attractive, not less attractive. And neighborhood businesses, in many places I think, are doing reasonably well because people who would be buying lunch in Manhattan instead are buying lunch-

Tanya Domi:

In the neighborhood.

John Mollenkopf:

... on the neighborhood commercial street. So that's put upward pressure on many neighborhoods and a sort of unexpected effect, I think, or unanticipated effect of the work at home shift over the last couple of years.

John Mollenkopf:

Of course, there are still many neighborhoods where unemployment or lack of employment remains high and are commercially distressed that are also feeling housing pressure. So I don't want to paint some uniformly rosy picture of what's happening across neighborhoods of New York City. But many of the neighborhoods, even more lively than they were in, let's say, the summer of 2019.

Tanya Domi:

I don't disagree with that. I mean, you live in Park Slope. I live in Riverdale in northwest Bronx. I was out last night and there were people on the street, people in restaurants. Yeah, we actually all got together to try to save certain restaurants.

John Mollenkopf:

Exactly.

Tanya Domi:

Like the diner, Tiny's Diner on Riverdale Avenue. We all really went in and people were ordering and delivery for a long time.

John Mollenkopf:

So the idea that COVID was going to reduce employment in central business districts, and that was going to lead to the substantial decline of New York City, there's an element that that's true in terms of office occupancy in the central areas, but counterbalancing that has been the attractiveness in the strength of many of these neighborhoods. And I know a lot of people that left for a while because they were scared of the health consequences at the beginning, come back. So I think the strength of the neighborhoods is a key to the positive future of the city.

Tanya Domi:

Okay. But you and I also work at the Graduate Center, and we can see that most of the restaurants around this building, like on 35th Street, closed. I mean, they couldn't make it. It's Midtown. Most of that traffic is from people who work around here, or they happen to be tourists and they patronize these restaurants, but they're gone.

John Mollenkopf:

Yes, so that's the short-term impact.

Tanya Domi:

That is short. It is short-term.

John Mollenkopf:

Whether it's also going to be the long-term impact, I think, you can't assume that it will be a long-term impact just because it's a short-term impact.

Tanya Domi:

So I'm saying this because the recovery has been slower than everyone would like to see, I think.

John Mollenkopf:

Well, there have been ups and downs in the New York City business cycle forever. And in some cases, New York City was worse than the national trends. And in other cases, it affected us more lightly. I think because we were ground zero for the beginning of the COVID pandemic. And the impact was so concentrated and so negative that has meant that New York's job loss was bigger and sharper than just about anywhere else and because of-

Tanya Domi:

In the country, yeah.

John Mollenkopf:

... the concentration in the center it's been slower to return, but it's gradually getting back there.

Tanya Domi:

It is.

John Mollenkopf:

Although, it's taking a different shape than it was-

Tanya Domi:

Before.

John Mollenkopf:

... before.

Tanya Domi:

Yeah. And I mean, Broadway's returned and that's really important. That's over 100 thousand people and all the residual businesses that surround Broadway. But it's part of the dynamic that Eric Adams walked into. And I guess, that's why I'm going over it. And when he arrived, he was very energetic and seemed to appear to be everywhere. He was pretty dismissive of social media, and he was being trolled and mocked very quickly and ended up becoming a satire within the first month he was mayor. Called himself, "I'm a guy was swagger and this is the city of swagger. And I'm here to be the mayor and I'm going to show up and be seen."

Tanya Domi:

But in comparison to past mayors, I mean, Bill de Blasio came in with a pre-K mandate. That was a real significant part of his campaign promises. Bloomberg did health. He went on a really incredible anti-

smoking campaign and then began the restaurant calorie counts. And he did use the health department. It seemed to elevate New Yorker's awareness of health and stop smoking in bars, et cetera.

Tanya Domi:

But where do you think Adams is if he's anywhere on what's the big issue for him? He's talking about addressing the gun violence issue, but it's a pretty endemic problem given also the additional decision by the SCOTUS on the New York gun law?

John Mollenkopf:

Well, I think Eric Adams is an interesting combination of themes from Rudy Giuliani and David Dinkins. Rudy Giuliani in the sense that people felt in those years that crime was threatening, but the city needed more public order. And with David Dinkins that there had been communities that had been ignored and abused and forgotten, and especially the Black communities of New York City and that they finally had a seat at the table. They would be listened to and heard.

John Mollenkopf:

In an interesting way, Adams combines those two themes. I think he will like Dinkins be judged in the midterm at the end of his first term when he was running for reelection, primarily on how well he's done in terms of returning order to the city. And by that, I mean, not only reducing violent crime, but restoring people's confidence that they can walk safely around the streets without being hassled in all the various different ways that people feel that they're being hassled at the moment.

Tanya Domi:

Yeah. I think that's true. I mean, he did say that he wanted to address the safety issues and I think you articulated those quite well.

John Mollenkopf:

Another contributing factor to this sense of lack of public order is that I think the police department with whom Bill de Blasio never had good-

Tanya Domi:

Relationship, yeah.

John Mollenkopf:

... relationships. I think that they just went on a quiet strike in the last couple of years at the administration where they weren't enforcing anything. So people began to feel, "Well, I can get away with jumping over the turns style, which I couldn't do in the previous era." Or "I don't need to pay attention to any rules." And there, in polling, it's not hard to find respondents who will say things like, "Well, the police are just standing around, not doing anything, not paying any attention to these irritating things that are going on." And as a former police officer, Mayor Adams presented himself as somebody who knew how to make the police department work. And it's not clear that he's pulled that off yet. And I think that will be-

Tanya Domi:

That remains to be seen.

John Mollenkopf:

Yes. Because the rank-and-file police officers don't necessarily like mayors. They didn't even like Rudy Giuliani all that much.

Tanya Domi:

Of course. Yeah. An interesting hire with the police commissioner. I mean, she grew up in Queens and was actually working on Long Island is from New York, but not beholden to New York. I thought from a staffing standpoint, that was an interesting hire.

John Mollenkopf:

Yes. And of course, Philip Banks was a former among the most senior officers in the police department previously. He retired under somewhat questionable practices that he'd engage in, came to light. Obviously, the mayor's very comfortable with him but one wonders who's actually the most important voice as far as policing goes. Is it the police commissioner? Is it Mr. Banks? Is it the mayor? That kind of situation I think doesn't necessarily augur well for a smoothly running organizational change in the police department.

Tanya Domi:

Because there's too many voices talking about it from different perspectives?

John Mollenkopf:

Yeah. And it's not clear who's the final word.

Tanya Domi:

That's a very good point. Speaking of challenges, schools. He got an extension on mayoral control for two years, but not four. And it seemed like the governor was really busy or just put the decision off to the last minute. And now he's announced major cuts to K through 12.

John Mollenkopf:

Well, the major cuts come from funding formulas that are driven by enrollment and we've had instant substantial drop in enrollment in the schools and also within CUNY, as we will know a number of campuses.

Tanya Domi:

Yes.

John Mollenkopf:

So it's not like the mayor said, "Oh, I need some money from somewhere. I'm going to take a couple \$100 million away from school budget."

Tanya Domi:

Do you think he's explained that well enough to the public? I mean, there is a lawsuit.

John Mollenkopf:

Yes. It's not necessarily an easy thing to explain, but on the other hand, only about one in five households in New York City has a child in the public schools. So for a fifth of us, our school spending is by far the biggest item in the city budget. And there are a lot of people say, "Well, we spend a lot of money on the schools. What are we getting from it? And why should we spend more money on fewer students? Shouldn't you spend the money more effectively?" So yes, there's a big constituency for maintaining the levels of school funding. But there's also constituencies out there that wonder whether we're getting value for money in our public school system.

Tanya Domi:

That's fair. Yeah. I mean, there's tensions in a budget, obviously as well. So I think it did catch people by surprise. Yes, enrollment is definitely down. People have left the city, but yet I think the latest data is we're at 8.8 million people.

John Mollenkopf:

No. Actually, we've lost a few hundred thousand, probably around 350,000 or so people from that peak, which was right before the pandemic.

Tanya Domi:

Okay. So, that isn't the final accurate population?

John Mollenkopf:

No, it isn't.

Tanya Domi:

Okay. I guess, the census doesn't count either because-

John Mollenkopf:

Well, the 2020 census counted an unexpectedly to me, big number, because I'd already seen people begun to leave at least temporarily. And there were parts of the city that normally you would expect to participate highly in the census, like the upper east side where participation rates were strikingly low because a lot of people were out of town and somehow didn't connect with their census forms. So I was a little bit surprised that we got-

Tanya Domi:

The higher count?

John Mollenkopf:

... the 8.8 number. But the post 2020... So we're a couple of years on beyond that date now and the census population estimates that are based on births and deaths, and moving in and moving out have shown a decrease of about 350,000 in our population.

Tanya Domi:

350,000. So, as you look at this situation... And there's some good things also that are happening, that actually started before the mayor took over, but the development of Pennsylvania Station for Amtrak

and LaGuardia airport has been dramatically upgraded, but these have been some cause of concern for New York, especially on LaGuardia. But what do you think are the opportunities for him? Are there opportunities that you think he can take advantage of that you've thought about, that would be good for any mayor in New York City?

John Mollenkopf:

Well, the statements from the mayor about what are at the top of his list of concerns that I'm most moved by, I'm most compelled by are, that we need to connect youth growing up from minority and lower income backgrounds in New York City with the job opportunities that a dynamic global corporate economy provides.

John Mollenkopf:

There has been a disconnect and even we can see it when we look at the post education employment records of CUNY students, they're not getting as good at jobs as we think they deserve to get. So thinking about the pipeline from growing up, going through middle school, getting through high school, going through college, getting good jobs, having incomes that rise over time, what we like to highlight in the findings of the Chetty et al. group about intergenerational upper mobility and that three of our campuses are in the top 10 in the country in terms of producing that, how do we do that better? How do we do it more? How can we amp that up? I think that's something that the mayor is interested in doing, although we haven't yet seen from him what's his comprehensive plan about how to do it.

John Mollenkopf:

We also haven't really... Although we've had a statement about what his housing policy is going to be and that he's going to move away from the numbers targets that were practiced in the de Blasio and Bloomberg administration. It's not entirely clear what his alternative is or is going to be or mean. So that, I think as with crime, the jury is still out on how effective those efforts are going to be or what exactly they're going to be. I think he has a pretty good team of housing policy experts in the administration, but six months is not long enough to see what they're really going to accomplish.

Tanya Domi:

To see what they're capable of? Would you say the same would apply to a job development, like maybe a public private partnership that might yield too?

John Mollenkopf:

Will we have tons of public private partnerships in New York City around employment and training. What I don't think we have is a full court press from the mayoral level-

Tanya Domi:

Like a czar.

John Mollenkopf:

Well, from the mayor, I mean, the mayor talks about calling up the corporate leaders of the city and making sure that they're hiring young people who are growing up in New York City. That's a nice thought and a nice gesture, but it needs to be formulated into a comprehensive plan.

Tanya Domi:

So if you were advising him now, this is the six month mark and you were talking to Eric Adams, what would you say to him right now about what he should do if he wants to, first of all, project and actually accomplish many of the things that you've already mentioned and what does he want to do that will best benefit the city and how to do that? What would you advise him to do at this point? It's six months is a good time to check in with any elected official.

John Mollenkopf:

Well, in thinking about this question, as we were planning to talk together about it, I began asking myself, how much do we want a mayor to be an excellent manager? And how much do we want him or her to be someone who's in tune with the population who really hears what people care about and they trust him or her to understand their problems and to be focusing on addressing them.

John Mollenkopf:

And the Adams administration contains a lot of very capable, experienced, competent people, but it has not yet demonstrated that it's cohesively organized and managerially tight in the way that the Bloomberg bullpen operated, and Mayor Bloomberg didn't have to be a manager because he had a lot of strong managers around him-

Tanya Domi:

Around him.

John Mollenkopf:

... And he could orchestrate the balance of their activities and listen to them. And everybody who was managing a component of city government knew that they could get a hearing with the mayor. And he would either say yes or no, or let's go about this a different way, but you would get a decision on what to move forward on.

John Mollenkopf:

And as you mentioned, Bloomberg had a lot of public health initiatives. He created the center for economic opportunity to focus on a raft of anti-poverty and upward mobility programs. And he evolved a set of things that he was going to work on systematically across the period of his administration.

John Mollenkopf:

And at the beginning, the de Blasio administration also had a pretty clear set of equality objectives or attacking inequality objectives that were new to city government. I haven't gotten the sense yet that the Adams administration has gelled enough to figure out. Okay, here are the two, three, four main themes... I mean, we know that he has to work on restoring faith in public order and reducing crime in the city. And affordable housing has been a chronic problem for the city that every mayor has to-

Tanya Domi:

To deal with.

John Mollenkopf:

... deal with. But above and beyond that, I think the fact that he's out and about, if you look at his daily schedule, he has gone lots and lots of... He's out there on the streets, beating the streets, meeting people, pressing the flesh, listening to them, going to events, and you get the sense that he's never in the mayor's office because he's out traveling around, keeping his ear to the ground in the city. And maybe if you had a strong, well-organized administration, maybe the mayor-

Tanya Domi:

Could be able to that.

John Mollenkopf:

... doesn't need to be in the office-

Tanya Domi:

In the office.

John Mollenkopf:

... all the time, but I don't get the sense that the administration is gelled administratively around a key set of objectives that there were.

Tanya Domi:

Priorities and objectives.

John Mollenkopf:

So in that sense, if the mayor's not in the office, directing everyone, then maybe that reduces the chance that they can gel. I mean, we'll see-

Tanya Domi:

That's-

John Mollenkopf:

... maybe it'll work for him. Ed Koch was a very popular mayor in part because he loved to talk. He loved to-

Tanya Domi:

He's a great retail politician, right?

John Mollenkopf:

... give the press a hard time. He loved to make jokes at events, and I think that's an important part of the mayoralty, to be available to people, to not just be a distant figured but be somebody you might even run into on the subway or whatever. But at the same time, you have to have a well-organized managerial structure. I'm not saying it hasn't emerged or won't emerge, or can't emerge, but it's not-

Tanya Domi:

Evident.

John Mollenkopf:

... clear to me at the moment how that's all working.

Tanya Domi:

That's fair enough. Well, he's an interesting guy. I think your analysis of saying he's a combination of Giuliani and... And who was the other?

John Mollenkopf:

David Dinkins, of course.

Tanya Domi:

David Dinkins. Yes.

John Mollenkopf:

Our only other Black mayor.

Tanya Domi:

And you're a combination of it. And I think you're right about that in terms of-

John Mollenkopf:

So, David Dinkins was in trouble with the press from day one. Under attack from the tabloids. But the fact that he chose a press officer who was a Times reporter who had surreptitiously advised the campaign, even, I think struck a sour note with the New York Times at the beginning. So David Dinkins was under-

Tanya Domi:

Siege.

John Mollenkopf:

... the gun in a way. And also, I mean, he was expected to be able to reduce racial tensions in the city. And the fact that he couldn't snap his fingers and do that but in fact, it got worse just led to all that being reinforced.

John Mollenkopf:

Adam's faces the same expectations in terms of restoring racial peace and order and order on the streets. But because he's a former police officer, he didn't start out with the post and the news attacking him every day for everything that he did. He has a grace period to show what he does. But if he can't-

Tanya Domi:

Deliver.

John Mollenkopf:

... deliver, he's going to face the knock-on David Dinkins, that he wasn't a competent mayor. I happen to think he was a very competent mayor in a lot of respects. That's a minority opinion among experts on, on, on city government. But that's what Mayor Adams is going to face if he can't deliver on some of these core expectations that he faces.

Tanya Domi:

I think he stumbled a bit in my view. I think women, and I'll be honest with you, the gay community was very upset with him. He hired people who are anti-gay, and I think the pressure did get to him and he was angry, because there was a big demonstration across from the mayor's office. He should expect that in New York City, I mean, this is the home of... The beginning of the gay movement in the world. So he's kind of stumbled around. I hope he avoids that in the future. That's a big population in the city.

John Mollenkopf:

Well, also earlier you asked me what my advice might be or my questions. To me, the first thing a mayor should try to do is to win the support of the people that didn't vote for you, who you'll need in the reelection campaign. So it's interesting that Kathryn Garcia went to work for the governor of New York to run New York State Government.

John Mollenkopf:

If I were Eric Adams, I would've suggested that he would've done everything possible to get Kathryn Garcia to be first deputy mayor of New York City. He's appointed a number of people among his deputy mayors and senior commissioners who are very well-regarded. He did spend part of the campaign saying we don't need any college professors, which was a throwing an elbow at Maya Wiley who was at the new school. But there are a lot of other professors in New York City that true might not have-

Tanya Domi:

Liked that.

John Mollenkopf:

... liked that comment either. Yeah. So, the whole and the professional middle class didn't vote. I mean, he's-

Tanya Domi:

Didn't support him.

John Mollenkopf:

... he's presented himself as the blue-collar guy, he got the blue-collar vote, but he has to win over the professional middle class, which is mainly white but it's also black and-

Tanya Domi:

And it's brown too.

John Mollenkopf:

... it's brown. And I'm not sure that he's inclined... That that comes naturally to him. Appealing to the blue-collar base comes naturally to him.

Tanya Domi:

Right.

John Mollenkopf:

So I think he has to... He should. My political advice would be, think about how you can overcome your own... The limitations of your... The specific nature of your own appeal to reach to constituencies that you're going to need to govern.

Tanya Domi:

Well, the great politicians, John, as you know, they learn, and they grow, and they grow in real time. And so, I think we're going to see if he's capable of that.

John Mollenkopf:

We certainly shall.

Tanya Domi:

So I think we should revisit this in the next six months after the first year, do you agree?

John Mollenkopf:

Things are going to get worse rather than better over the next six months.

Tanya Domi:

So, you think the next six months are going to be very tough for him?

John Mollenkopf:

Well, the federal aid is running out. We're looking at a recession, we're looking at a recovery that has not been complete. So, the overall job number is back to nearly where it was before the COVID onset-

Tanya Domi:

That's true. That's true.

John Mollenkopf:

... but the composition in the jobs is different. And the location of where people work is different, is different. And there are still sectors of the economy that were hit very hard that neighborhood business districts in either in Midtown, but also in the lower income communities of the city are hurting. And the inflation surge and the likelihood that we'll have a technical recession. I mean if inflation is higher than the GDP growth rate-

Tanya Domi:

Growth rate.

John Mollenkopf:

... it's a decline in GDP. And two quarters decline in real GDP is a recession, and we're very close to that. And if the Fed keeps cranking up interest rates as they seem set to do, I think that the chance that there'll be an economic-

Tanya Domi:

Recession.

John Mollenkopf:

... slowdown-

Tanya Domi:

Yeah. Slowdown.

John Mollenkopf:

... certainly, a slowdown from the rate of recovery that we've had over the last couple of years. I think fiscally, it could be more difficult in the coming year than it has been in the past year. And that's exactly the kind of thing that made life extremely difficult for David Dinkins after his election in '89, because he looked at a fairly severe significant recession.

Tanya Domi:

That's right.

John Mollenkopf:

Let's hope it doesn't go that direction, but it could.

Tanya Domi:

Yeah. And I mean, those are problems beyond your own ability to address, but you have to be able to anticipate and really govern with the idea that you can lead people and gain their confidence and be able to do some things to show that you can improve the situation for people in the city. So it's sobering to think about what is ahead of us. It's sobering, indeed.

John Mollenkopf:

I would say in addition to my earlier recommendation that you have to win over the people that didn't vote for you, you also have to deliver for your base. Balancing those two things off was... Phillip Thompson, our PhD graduate from political science department who was deputy mayor and then de Blasio administration... Wrote a brilliant book about the tight rope that Black mayors walk between delivering from their constituency and winning over people who might not have supported them in the first place.

John Mollenkopf:

And it's maybe a harder job to do than being a white billionaire mayor who nobody wants to say anything negative about because they hope his foundation will give grant next year.

Tanya Domi:

Will give them money. Yeah.

John Mollenkopf:

So, it's going to be a challenging period for the mayor.

Tanya Domi:

And obviously, it'll be challenging for New Yorkers too.

John Mollenkopf:

But every time there's a crisis in New York City, neighborhoods pulled together in my experience. After Sandy, Red Hook got swamped, the neighborhoods around Red Hook banded together to help the city, created programs to help. And the COVID crisis, there were mutual aids societies set up in many neighborhoods to help families that were in crisis. And agencies responded in new ways to help communities build resilience. And there's a lot of potential within the city to mobilize in a positive way. And part of his job is going to be to elicit as much of that as possible.

Tanya Domi:

Okay. Well, there is a saying from the Midwest where I'm from, "Show me I'm from Missouri." So let's see if Mayor Adams can show all of us New Yorkers that he's up to the job.

Tanya Domi:

I want to thank you for being with us today, John. It's been a really interesting conversation.

John Mollenkopf:

You're most welcome, really enjoyed it.

Tanya Domi:

Thanks for tuning into The Thought Project and thanks to our guest, distinguished professor, John Mollenkopf, of the CUNY Graduate Center.

Tanya Domi:

The Thought Project is brought to you with production engineering and technical assistance by audio engineer, Kevin Wolf and CUNY TV. I'm Tanya Domi, tune in next week.