

WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH THE NY PUBLIC LIBRARY BUDGET?

On November 17, 2023 Eric Adams announced a list of various proposed budget cuts to city funding, one of which was the New York Public Library, an institution that has already battled and overcome multiple attempted budget cuts this year. In June, only three months after Eric Adams stated that the NYPL would be spared from any budget cuts,¹ Adams harshly targeted the public library system again, proposing a \$36.2 million budget cut. In his fiscal plan, Adams planned to cut \$13.6 million in funding across the New York, Brooklyn, and Queens public libraries, \$20.5 million over the next three years, and the BPL's budget by around \$8 million within the next four.² As usual, this threat was met with public outcry and ultimately overruled due to an active campaign and various rallies backed by both everyday New Yorkers and celebrities.³

However, library officials knew Adam's disdain for beneficial public services and blatant disregard for public opinion would mean an eventual and inevitable cut to their funding. As a result of Adams' newly edited fiscal plan, "Brooklyn Public Library, Queens Public Library, and The New York Public Library... must eliminate seven-day service across the city, including ending Sunday service at the vast majority of branches that currently offer it. We also will be reducing spending on library materials, programming, and building maintenance and repairs" said Queen Public Library staff in a public statement.⁴

There are layers here. First, we really have to go back to last spring. Patron use has largely recovered to pre-pandemic levels for things like visits and check-outs. In-person events are still down but trending upwards, and digital check-outs are still very high. So overall, we're serving more patrons now than we were before the pandemic. Naturally we thought we were in a position to advocate for more funding. Instead, the Mayor wanted to take 2.5% off our budget. No reason given. Then the Mayor brought that up to 3.5%. While we were fighting that, he demanded another 4% from all city agencies (making a total of 7.5% of our operating budget). Shortly after, the Mayor took credit for saving libraries and lied when he said he did it "without taking a single penny from our library systems,"⁵ because he still cut our budget by 3.5%. We were told explicitly by the Mayor's office to "give them this victory lap" and not say anything about him actually still cutting our budget. One thing to remember that we learned during that budget fight was that of all big city library systems in the U.S., New York City libraries are open the fewest amount of hours. 3 months later, the mayor's OMB (Office of Management and Budget) very quietly tells us to gut 5% from our budget for this fiscal year. We announced this a few weeks ago. We have already eliminated 7-day service starting Dec 17th – a closure that includes the Central branch of the NYPL – and cut our collections budget, so wait times are going to be longer for checkouts (including digital checkouts). We've already eliminated all open positions and instituted a hiring freeze. Shortly after that, OMB told us to cut ANOTHER 5% on January 1st. That will effectively eliminate 6-day service and reduce building maintenance funding. So it will take even longer to fix broken shelves or remove graffiti, etc. We then learned that the second cut will trigger a rate law where if a public service has its budget cut 10% or more within a single fiscal year, the state cuts its share proportionately. Then we were told to expect another 5% cut for next fiscal year. All while the city is sitting on a record \$8 billion in surplus reserves! And the only reason he's given is the "immigrant crisis" which we already know isn't costing NYC nearly what Adams claims it is.⁶ Meanwhile, patron use is still going up so we are trying to serve more and more New Yorkers with less and less money. --- Anonymous, BPL, Staff

WHAT WILL LIBRARY BUDGET CUTS MEAN FOR NEW YORKERS?

A reduced budget and cut hours mean less access to libraries' educational and social materials, which will be detrimental to all New Yorkers. Both the physical and internal structure of New York's public libraries will suffer greatly, and with more proposed budget cuts in the near future, it doesn't seem like any of the city's social programs are on track to improve. Especially today, libraries serve as the center of communities, acting as a free place to learn, teach, read, play, or even just sit. We should all be outraged at the mayor and government for taking away access to educational resources – to books, the internet, language classes, arts and craft lessons, movie screenings, career coaching, resume editing, job support, immigration support, technology labs, music lessons, etc. etc. The only way New Yorkers will survive in the city is by relying on each other and realizing that the government does not care about us.



LIBRARY BRANCHES IMPACTED BY SERVICE REDUCTION

New York Public Library: The elimination of Sunday service at all locations that currently offer it. The last day of Sunday service will be November 26.

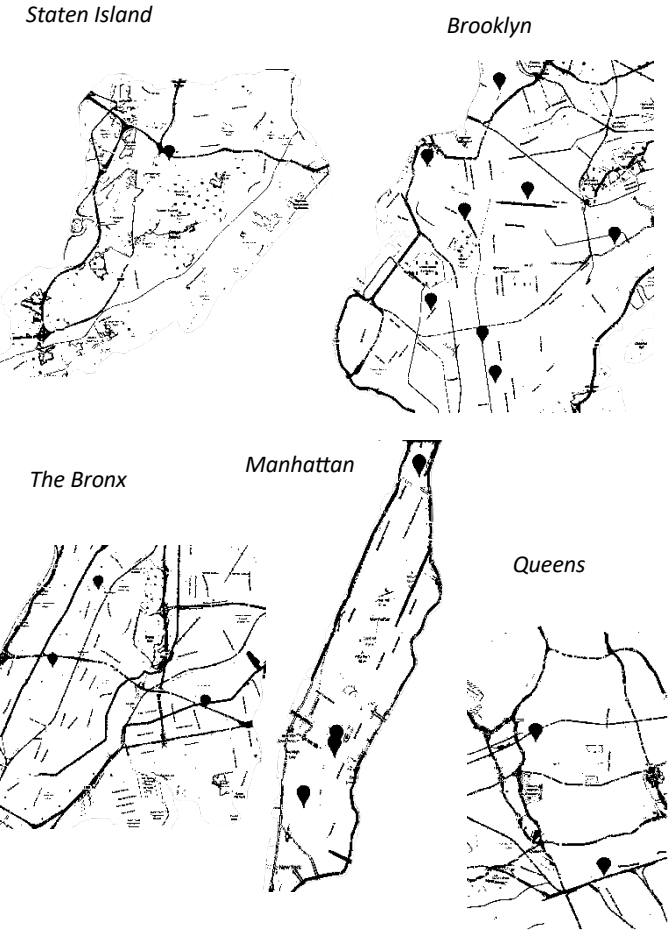
- *Bronx Library Center (Bronx)
- *Stavros Niarchos Foundation (Manhattan)
- *Stephen A. Schwarzman Building (Manhattan)
- *Washington Heights (Manhattan)
- *Grand Concourse (Bronx)
- *Jefferson Market (Manhattan)
- *Parkchester (Bronx)
- *Todt Hill–Westerleigh (Staten Island)

Queens Public Library: The elimination of Sunday service at all locations that currently offer it. The last day of Sunday service will be November 26.

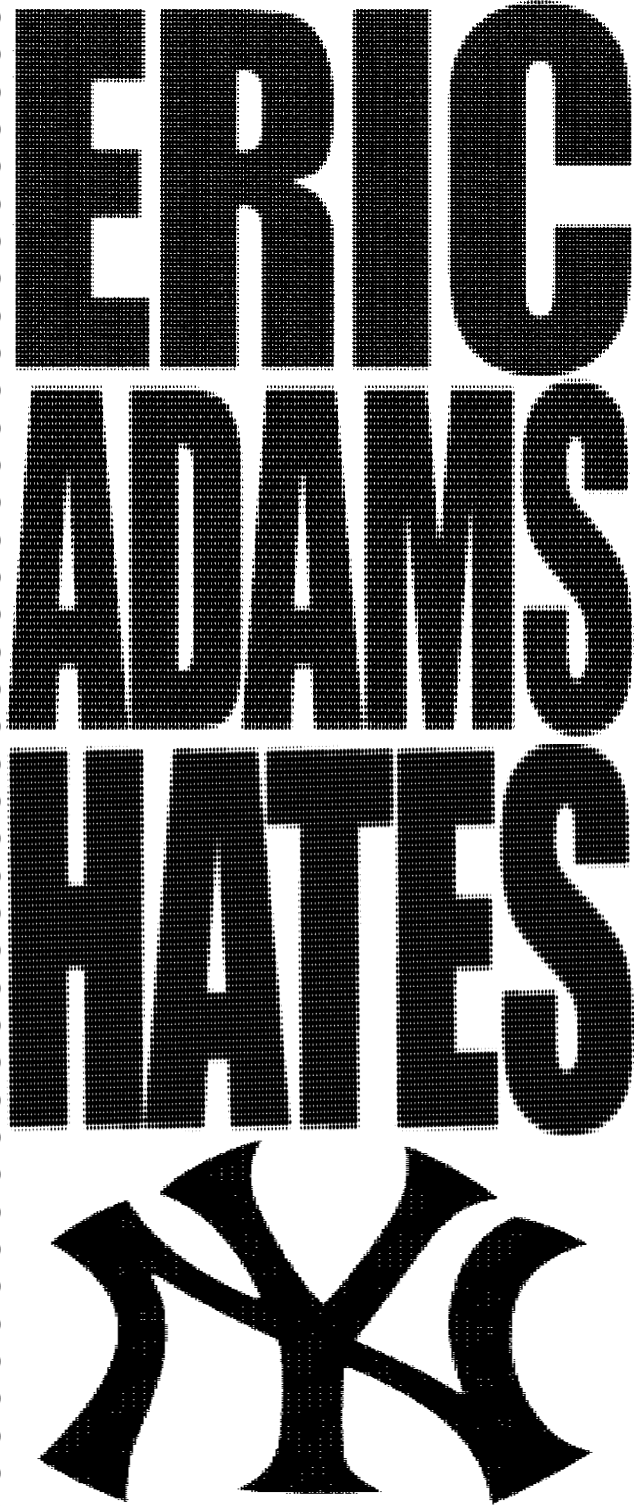
- *Central Public Library at Central (Jamaica)
- *Queens Public Library at Flushing

Brooklyn Public Library: The elimination of Sunday service at all locations that currently offer it. The last day of Sunday service will be December 17

- *Borough Park
- *Greenpoint
- *Midwood
- *Brooklyn Heights
- *Kings Highway
- *New Lots
- *Central
- *Macon



AN 8-BALL COMMUNITY PSA:





ERIC ADAMS BLAMES BUDGET CUTS ON MIGRANT CRISIS

According to the mayor's office, the recent NYPL budget cuts are part of an ongoing response to what they are describing as a "migrant crisis." City Hall blamed the cuts⁹, which will impact virtually every city agency, on costs to house and feed asylum seekers. The mayor quotes as much as a \$12 billion expense over the next four years to respond to an influx of immigrants, claiming 110,000 registered immigrants in 2023.¹⁰ For context, the city housed 130,000 migrants as recently as 2016. In an interview on PBS NewsHour, the mayor quotes the influx of migrants at "...10,000 a month. That's not sustainable. And it's unfair to those who came here to pursue the American dream."

Before criticizing the allocation of the mayor's funds over the last few years that have led to the debilitating NYPL budget cuts, it is important to recognize that the "crisis" the mayor is claiming will "destroy the city," is pretty much par for the course in regards to NYC's history of housing migrants. In 2016, NYC declared itself to be a sanctuary for undocumented migrants.¹¹ Thus, the surplus of migrants being sent from Texas, which Adams so loves to blame, should come as no surprise to the mayoral office. The truth is, the mayor had time to prepare, yet refused to. The \$36.2 million being cut from the NYPL budget pales in comparison to the supposed \$12 billion needed to fund the influx of migrants. Adams claims the money for this crisis will be used for education, but I fail to see how crippling many public libraries of essential needs to account for less than 1/3 of a percent of the needed \$12 billion makes any sense whatsoever, especially considering the benefits of public goods like libraries for migrant communities.

The fiscal projections from the mayor's office used to defend these budget cuts come from questionable data. The total projected revenue for NYC's 2024 fiscal year is \$110 billion, and according to the mayor's office, will supposedly decrease over the next 3 years. This means the city will, apparently for some unknown reason, bring in less tax revenue in 2025, 2026 and 2027 than it did in 2024.¹² Unless Mayor Adams is planning a magical tax cut, or his office is predicting the city's population to decrease over the next few years, this projection doesn't make any sense.

The migrant crisis Mayor Adams is blaming for these cuts was a predictable one, and the panic he is spreading seems like a large effort to make amends for the misallocation of budgets that has partially led to his unpopularity amongst New York City voters. Eric Adams' newfound tactic of blaming republicans for the city's lack of funding seems like a last-ditch effort to save face as he gears up for reelection in 2025. It appears the city has more than enough funding to maintain the library budget. Just look at the police budget, which bolstered over \$10.8 billion in 2023, yet will receive just a fractional cut of their \$88.9 million budget. For comparison, the NYPL is on track to lose 5% of its budget, while the NYPD will lose less than .8%. In short, fuck the NYPD and Fuck Eric Adams.



WRITINGS FROM NY PUBLIC LIBRARY LIBRARIANS & STAFF

How do I feel about it? I'm tired. I'm tired of feeling like I have to fight for my job day after day after day. I'm scared too. So far there are no plans for layoffs. But how do you just cut as much as 20% of your total operating budget without it? So, I'm trying to go above and beyond so that if it comes down to it, I'm not one of those layoffs and it's exhausting. He's also gutting 3-K (early education for 3-year-olds) and I have a 2-year-old which means that instead of the 3-K lottery we were hoping for, we need another \$25-30k for next year's childcare which we already can't afford. And so we hope and hope that maybe we get lucky by the time he's 4 and there's still universal Pre-K.

I'm exhausted, scared, and frankly angry. This Mayor who lives in a \$10 million, 4-bedroom penthouse overlooking Central Park is telling us we can't afford to have libraries even 6 days a week, all while he gives landlords and restaurant owners whatever they want. What's more is the "influx" of immigrants is nothing new - It's as old as New York itself. We've always been a city of immigrants and since 1896, the *only* place in New York City immigrants can go, get information, translation services, access to jobs, applications, resume help, housing help, a place to take their kids, and just to have a safe place to be where you don't have to spend a dime... is our libraries. So even if we're willing to concede whatever "crisis" this millionaire mayor has made up, he's gutting the only resource we have to 'get out of it' and at the expense of all New Yorkers, and for what? The Times Square Robocop?



A lot can happen in the next month, it's going to have to. --Anonymous, BPL, Staff



My feelings about the mayor's library budget cuts are two-fold, in that I have worries that specifically apply to my coworkers and more macro concerns about the state of library funding in NYC and in the US at large.

Working Sundays is optional: only 10 of our 60 branches remain open on Sundays, so those who choose to work get time and a half pay. Because our salaries are not commensurate with inflation, and many clerical staff are seriously underpaid, this means that Sunday service is often a life-line for staff to boost their paychecks. Losing that additional day of work is really devastating for many in the system, and that sucks to see.

We are already deeply under-staffed, and many branches are missing key roles that now won't be filled due to the lack of funding. This combined with issues in our administration and union leadership (DC37) is making me feel awfully pessimistic about how staff are going to be supported during this time.

This ultimately is not just a result of the budget cuts, but really reflects a much larger issue within the library system which is that librarians and especially clerical staff are often expected to perform the role of librarian, social worker, nurse, and teacher, whilst not having the support or training to provide actual expertise in any of those areas.

I often feel grateful I get to work in a city where I am not consistently threatened by Moms for Liberty or any other dingbat right-wing fascist organization, but unfortunately working in a liberal city doesn't mean labor conditions are improved. We've already cut our request to purchase program that I was a committee member of, where patrons could submit book requests and we would suggest them to our buying team. That will no longer exist for the time being. We will also begin having to cut the various children's summer reading and free book programs. The full scope of the impact of the cuts honestly haven't made themselves evident yet, but I imagine the range of services we can offer are going to start to dwindle. BPL recently hired its first social worker, and I cross my fingers that that program will be able to expand even with the cuts, but it isn't certain. When there are already so few functioning city services here in New York, I'm not sure how this will play out in the long term.

--Anonymous, BPL, Senior Librarian



Here's some very jumbled thoughts I have on our poor-hating mayor's latest round of budget cuts:

Eric Adams has asked all city agencies for a 5% budget cut. For NYPL, that's about 10 million dollars. To put that in context, the NYPD is currently seeking \$500 million to encrypt their radios. That's more than our entire operating budget for a whole year. And of course, it goes without saying that our cop mayor has exempted NYPD from cuts due to "safety concerns."



Adams wants to vilify migrants and say they "will destroy New York City"⁷ (remember when he literally said that??), but libraries are on the front lines working to serve this community. While the NYPL is busy stealing the mopeds that people use to scrape by in this city⁸, my colleagues and I are busy helping folks navigate the hellish bureaucracy of public services this city might offer. My colleagues and I are out there trying to give someone something rather than just saying "no you can't do this" or "you have to pay your own way." As much as Adams might be trying to force us all into a scarcity mindset with these cuts, we know that there is more than enough for everyone to get everything.



Like many, I'm dreaming of a world without work. But while I'm confined to a system that forces me to pay bills and make rent to struggle for my survival, I love working at the library, a place that at its ethos is determined to give people something without asking for anything in return. Whether that's a book, a musical instrument, access to the internet, free admission to a museum, a new recipe, a yoga lesson, some great conversation, a movie or just a warm/cool place to rest your body. Whether

you want help working on your resume or a recommendation for what television show to watch next or how to email your grandkid. I want to meet those information needs because all information everyone is looking for is valid, however you want to define that expansive word "information."

It's been said a million times by a million people more eloquent than me, but libraries just don't make sense in this capitalistic hellscape that we are all fighting against. And those enemies of the people like Eric Adams who want you to pay for every single small joy and comfort in your life, want to see the public library destroyed. Also, while I'm at it, let's be clear: they are coming for the library that you and I know and love, the one where the library workers know your name and ask how your mom's doing, not the one that throws galas for the ultra-wealthy and names their central building after people responsible for the housing crisis.

Lastly and forever: FUCK ERIC ADAMS!
--Anonymous, NYPL Bronx, Librarian



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