



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Ruben Diaz

Another Bad Moment for Staten Island

RUBEN DIAZ August 10, 2010

| COMMITTEE: **LATINO CAUCUS**

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by New York State Senator Reverend Ruben Diaz

For weeks, Staten Islanders have cried out for help for 9 Mexicans who were brutally assaulted in bias attacks. As the Chair of the Senate Puerto Rican/Latino Caucus and as the President of the New York Hispanic Clergy Organization, I prepared for a prayerful demonstration to be held today against all manners of violence against ethnic groups.

Out of respect for the ongoing efforts of St Philip's Baptist Church, I planned for the gathering to take place on the steps of the Staten Island church with dozens of my fellow ministers, St. Philip's Reverend Baker, Mexican Consul General's Chief of Staff Carolina Ayala, Mr. Tony Herbert, Assemblyman Marcos Crespo, and a representative from Governor Paterson's office.

An ugly confrontation by Senator Diane Savino and Assemblyman Matthew Titone awaited us outside the church. (St. Philips's was not open and Reverend Baker was not present.)

The Staten Island legislators defiantly stood on the steps of the Baptist Church to deprive their borough's Mexican community of much needed prayer and support.

One could only be reminded of old footage of the 1961 Freedom Riders and the response they received as they got off their buses to pray against racial discrimination.

Shouts of “Go Home” in Staten Island came close enough to the anger of their Alabama forerunners who yelled at New Yorkers who came to protest racial discrimination in the south.

In nothing less than a shameful display of raw bigotry. Senator Savino and Assemblyman Titone ignored the plight of Mexicans who had been violently attacked on Staten Island. Instead, they chose to disrupt a Pentecostal Ministers' prayerful support.

Today was a very sad day for tolerance. Local authorities tried to use the rainbow flag as an offensive weapon against a gathering of clergy to protest the recent spate of hate crimes against Mexican immigrants in Staten Island.

Today's political gamesmanship by Staten Island legislators may have been intended to further intimidate Mexicans in Staten Island from asking for help from anyone outside of their borough.

I hope they all know that they can still count on me.