



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Ruben Diaz

What You Should Know

RUBEN DIAZ March 19, 2012

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God Hates Ugly and He is Watching

A few days ago, the New York State Attorney General conducted a press conference to announce that thanks to the good work of his office, he just indicted Mr. Clement Gardner, the chief fiscal officer of the Christian Community Benevolent Association for criminally directing payments to himself.

Mr. Schneiderman based his charges for this indictment on a reported confession made by Mr. Gardner to an FBI agent almost five years ago when Mr. Schneiderman was not yet an Attorney General.

According to Mr. Bullets Campbell, the FBI agent, Mr. Gardner told him that between 2004 and 2007, he wrote and issued some checks to his name, that he embezzled \$75,000 from the

Christian Community Benevolent Association, and that the money he embezzled was from donations that the organization received from private companies – not, I repeat, not money from any member items nor any money assigned by Members of the State Legislature.

Neither Eric Schneiderman at his press conference nor any reporters had the decency to mention these particularly important issues. Not that it makes it right if Mr. Gardner really committed these crimes, but it will make a lot of difference in peoples' minds to see how conniving, destructive and malicious some have been trying to portray me.

You should know that the news of Mr. Gardner's indictment caught everyone by surprise because to all of us, Mr. Gardner has always been a decent, trustworthy and responsible individual committed to his work.

You should also know that every year – especially since 2003 – there have been private auditors who have been responsible to conduct audits and document any wrongdoing.

To make matters worse and even more confusing, Mr. Gardner – the one who apparently confessed to the FBI agent that he embezzled and stole money, went to court and in front of a judge, pleaded innocent to the charges of what he supposedly confessed to doing.

You should also know that there is no love lost between State Attorney General Eric Schneiderman and myself. There has always been a personal confrontation and disagreement between us dating back to 2002 when I got elected to the New York State Senate and started promoting my philosophy and belief.

Que sera, Que sera. Exactly what does Eric Schneiderman have? Could it be that he has a botched undercover operation, a botched felony arrest, and a botched smear campaign?

According to court documents released to and posted online by the press, Mr. Gardner's indictment is based on a confession he made almost five years ago, and only Mr. Gardner can identify the checks and vouchers he wrote and deposited to his personal account. I still don't believe that Mr. Gardner was capable of committing such a low and criminal act, betraying such a beautiful and committed community-minded organization and the trust we all placed in him. But as I have said in one of my previous columns "Cursed is the one who trusts in man." (Jeremiah 17:5)

The Christian Community Benevolent Association is an organization that I founded in 1977, and for 25 years I gave my time serving as its Executive Director on a volunteer basis without receiving compensation.

This organization, for the past 35 years, has been a jewel in the Bronx protecting senior citizens, building affordable housing, and creating programs to provide many different services for the needy and poor residents of the South Bronx.

When practically everyone abandoned the South Bronx – banks red-lighted the area, companies left, housing was burned to the ground – I was there with the Christian Community Benevolent Association and with members of our staff to create job opportunities and look out for and protect what was left.

I am proud and honored to know that staff members and volunteers gave their time and sweat to help others make the Christian Community Benevolent Association an organization that at one time created job opportunities for more than 1,300 people when everyone else abandoned us. Even my three children at very early ages went with us to serve meals and provide services to senior citizens.

Knowing the lack of love between Eric Schneiderman and myself, I have to say that it is easy to indict a ham sandwich, it's easy to hold a press conference to destroy the reputation and character of families, it's easy to make headlines.

It is my prayer and sincere hope that Mr. Clement Gardner has not committed these serious atrocities. If he has actually committed the barbaric and repugnant act of stealing donated money from good people who help an organization dedicated to senior citizens, handicapped children and the needy, then he should be punished to the fullest extent of the law.

I really hope that this is not another publicity stunt and another attempt to get even with Senator Reverend Ruben Diaz. I really hope that this effort is not going to try to imitate what former Attorney General Andrew Cuomo did to Pedro Espada when he publicly accused him of stealing \$14 million dollars and never followed up – but made sure he lost his bid for re-election.

I advise Eric Schneiderman to hurry up because I believe that the statute of limitations has run out on Mr. Clement Gardner. Or it's too late and the statute has run out.

You should know that everyone is advising me to keep quiet and not talk about this, but my love for the Christian Community Benevolent Association, its staff members and the community is too great. The people we served for so many years and whose good work we did will never die.

Remember and never forget: God hates ugly and he is still watching.

I am not only a State Senator but I am a pastor, a minister, and the President of an organization comprised of more than 150 Pentecostal ministers throughout the City and State of New York. I am the one who preaches the Word of God every Sunday.

I am not a saint, and neither do I claim to walk on water. I have my own demons, but I assure you that they are not about a corrupt mind abusing the trust and confidence that my constituents have placed in me. My wife, my children, my friends and my constituents will never be embarrassed by what these accusers suggest.

To all of the very responsible press people who fabricated all kinds of stories to discredit and get back at the man with the cowboy hat and the big mouth: my advice is to read the indictment, digest it, go back to journalism school, and learn how to be honest, impartial, decent, objective and fair reporters.

In Puerto Rico there is an old adage that goes something like this: "The thief believes that, like himself, everyone else is also a thief." I'd like to add that the corrupted person and all of the corrupted journalists all see corruption around them. In their corrupt minds, they have an inability to see any of the good in another person.

I am Senator Rev. Rubén Díaz and this is what you should know.