



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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What You Should Know

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LILLIAM BARRIOS-PAOLI HAS A MESS TO CLEAN UP

You should know that I applaud Mayor-elect Bill DeBlasio's selection of Lilliam Barrios-Paoli as his Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services. I especially applaud him for taking time during that announcement to talk about the 11-year old girl, Dasani, who has been highlighted in recent New York Times series about homeless families in New York City's shelters. These families include more than 20,000 children.

The New York Times' December 2013 series of articles, Invisible Child, Dasani's Homeless Life, written by Andrea Elliot, focus on many aspects of the incredibly disturbing legacy left by outgoing Mayor Michael Bloomberg. The series details the shameful lack of compassion that Mayor Bloomberg had for desperate families in New York's shelter system. At Brooklyn's

Auburn Family Residence, where Dasani lives, these injustices include: "[i]nadequate food, inadequate medical attention, a leaky roof, moldy rooms and bathrooms with broken sinks and doors ... insufficient security and fire safety protections, fetid odors, and leaks from waste containers."

While there is nothing in these articles that can be ignored, I cannot help but ask myself how, under Mayor Bloomberg's fiscal stewardship, millions of New York City taxpayer dollars were allegedly being spent annually to operate just one family shelter building - where Dasani and so many other children languish in filth and trauma.

I have to ask how, in 2009-2010, New York City's Department of Homeless Services spent \$8 million dollars in a capitol renovation project to replace all exterior windows in this one homeless shelter with new energy efficient windows.

Yes, my dear reader: as part of Mayor Bloomberg's legacy, \$8 million dollars was spent to replace windows in the Auburn Family Residence's 10-story building. These were not stained glass windows, and the families who live in that building after the repairs still sleep in layers of clothing and prop mattresses against the new windows to keep out the cold. Another example of Bloomberg's fiscal irresponsibility.

You should know that during the very same time that \$8 million dollars of our public resources were spent to replace 10 stories of windows, the Empire State Building spent about half of that - \$4.6 million dollars - to refurbish its 6,514 windows.

With this in mind, it is even sadder to re-read the part of the Times article that describes how Dasani would sit at her window and "see all the way across Brooklyn to the Empire State Building, the first New York skyscraper to reach 100 floors. Her gaze always stops at that iconic temple of stone, its tip pointed celestially, its facade lit with promise."

Is there anyone who thinks that if I had allocated \$8 million dollars to replace the windows in any single building that there would not be a full blown investigation about what was really going on with that money? Is there anyone who thinks this isn't the tip of the iceberg of how the Bloomberg Administration grossly mismanaged New York's tax dollars on the backs of the poor and needy?

As the Bloomberg era finally comes to an end, I am hopeful that there will be an outcry for justice for all involved in this \$8 million dollar window debacle, and the millions allegedly spent by the Department of Health and Human Services on improving a deteriorated system. I hope this outcry will take place not only in the court of public opinion, but in the courts of law as well. I am hopeful that reporters and editors will investigate this incident and many more that remain ignored or have fallen through the cracks.

As the Christmas Season draws closer, I ask for everyone to keep Dasani and her family and all homeless New Yorkers in their prayers.

And ladies and gentlemen, I also ask you to keep Deputy Mayor Lilliam Barrios-Paoli and Mayor-elect Bill DeBlasio in your prayers because they have a very big mess to clean up.

This is Senator Senator Reverend Rubén Díaz, and this is what you should know.