



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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Something Doesn't Smell Right WITH This Deal

RUBEN DIAZ February 14, 2014

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

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SOMETHING DOESN'T SMELL RIGHT WITH THIS DEAL

You should know that Attorney General Eric Schneiderman called a press conference on Thursday, February 13, 2014 to release his findings after a 9-month investigation about the National Puerto Rican Day Parade. Among the few Puerto Rican elected officials and dignitaries who stood with him were: Former Bronx Borough President Fernando Ferrer, New York City Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito, and New York State Senators José Marcos Serrano and Gustavo Rivera.

You should know that in his release, Attorney General Eric Schneiderman found that Mr. Carlos Velasquez – who served as both the Marketing Agent for the National Puerto Rican Day Parade and the President of the G.A.L.O.S. Corporation (GALOS) - misappropriated one million dollars from the National Puerto Rican Day Parade over a six-year period.

You should also know that Attorney General Eric Schneiderman found that there was NO wrongdoing by the National Puerto Rican Day Parade President Madelyn Lugo, nor any other Member of that Board who were nevertheless forced to resign by the Attorney General.

Over and over, we have heard claims by Attorney General Eric Schneidrman and New York's elected officials that they want to put an end to corruption and punish people who have violated the law. But somehow, these do-gooders allowed Mr. Carlos Velasquez to get away with stealing 1 million dollars from the National Puerto Rican Day Parade, and the Attorney General is only requesting him to return a mere fraction of what he stole - one hundred thousand dollars, while allowing him to continue to do business with other organizations in New York.

Where is the indictment? Where is the arrest? Where is the perp walk?

You should know that Mr. Carlos Velasquez and the GALOS Corporation not only do marketing for the National Puerto Rican Day Parade, but for practically every other parade in New York City. These include the Hispanic Day Parade, the Dominican Day Parade – both in the Bronx and in Manhattan – the Honduran Day Parade, and many others.

It seems to me that an Attorney General who is truly interested in ending corruption would not only charge someone who stole one million dollars from one group, but would not allow that perpetrator and criminal to do business with other organizations. A responsible Attorney General who has identified someone who ripped off the National Puerto Rican Day Parade would protect other not-for-profit organizations and other Boards of Directors from being ripped off by that same person.

Why allow Mr. Carlos Velasquez and the GALOS Corporation to continue to do business with other not-for-businesses and parades when he already has a record of ripping off his clients?

Isn't the job of the Attorney General to protect all parades and all organizations from this identified criminal? Why allow him to continue to do business as if nothing like this had ever happened?

It seems to me that an Attorney General who is concerned with protecting groups from criminals would investigate every other parade and group that Mr. Carlos Velasquez has done business with and find out if any of them have been going through the same problems that the National Puerto Rican Day Parade has suffered.

I believe that it is important to identify and end corruption, and do whatever it takes to protect the community. But it looks like the wheeling and dealing of the Puerto Rican Day Parade has been done just so a handful of elected officials could take over the Parade and place their lackies in charge.

You should also know that the National Puerto Rican Day Parade Board has not been the only group that has been taken for a ride by a trusted individual. Among these other groups is the Metropolitan Council on Jewish Poverty, whose former CEO William Rapfogel was arrested and indicted by Attorney General Eric Schneiderman for embezzling 5 million dollars - a lot more money than was embezzled from the National Puerto Rican Day Parade.

I don't know if the Attorney General used the same rulebook and system of justice to force Members of that Board to resign, as he did with Board Members of the National Puerto Rican Day Parade. I don't know if the Attorney General has ever demanded for other not-for-profit Board Members to resign when one person has done wrong – or are his current standards exclusive for the National Puerto Rican Day Parade?

It seems to me that if other Boards Members from other organizations have not been forced to resign, and only the Board Members of the National Puerto Rican Day Parade are being forced to resign, then a great injustice has taken place.

Even though I could be accused of playing the race card here, I am forced to ask: What's going on here? Mr. Carlos Velasquez has not been arrested, indicted, and prevented from doing business with other not-for-profits in the city. Mr. Velasquez is the one who has been accused of embezzlement and fraud - not Madelyn Lugo - and why is it that Madelyn Lugo is receiving a bigger punishment than the thief who actually stole the money?

You should know that not even one of the Puerto Rican elected officials who stood with Attorney General Eric Schneiderman has the guts to question him and ask him when and if Board Members from other groups have been forced to resign because of the wrongdoings of one person.

Why are these elected officials who stood with Attorney General Eric Schneiderman and are supporting the ousting of Madelyn Lugo - allowing Carlos Velasquez to go free as if nothing has happened? And why are these elected officials being allowed to appoint their friends and lackies to the Board?

My dear reader, I have been told that even the Attorney General Eric Schneiderman himself is appointing one member of his own staff to the Board of the Puerto Rican Day Parade. Wow! What a coup! Not even the Four Amigos could have pulled this one off.

I would love to see Fernando Ferrer, along with Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito, and Senators José Marcos Serrano and Gustavo Rivera hold a press conference demanding the arrest of Mr. Carlos Velasquez.

Something is wrong with this deal. Something doesn't smell right with this deal. In fact, this whole thing stinks. Why were our public officials standing with Attorney General Eric Schneiderman while not even holding Carlos Velasquez criminally responsible for profiting from the Parade like a criminal? Are they just satisfied to take over the Parade? Was this their ultimate goal?

Ladies and gentlemen, this deal punishes a woman, the President of the Puerto Rican Day Parade and not the criminal, not the perpetrator, not the one who stole one million dollars. No one has had the courage or the decency to protect the President Madelyn Lugo. Is that justice?

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