



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Ruben Diaz

It Was Julio Pabón, Not Congressman Serrano

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WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

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By Senator Rev. Rubén Díaz

District 32 Bronx County, New York

Tel 718-991-3161

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You should know that it has been 21 years since Cuba's Communist Dictator Fidel Castro visited Bronx County. To be more exact, the Dictator's visit to Bronx County happened on Monday, October 23, 1995.

It is important for you to know that 21 years later, after reading a book titled "Knockout: Fidel Castro Visits The South Bronx" written by my friend, Julio Pabón, I have learned that it was not Congressman José Serrano who was the author, the coordinator and the consummator, but rather, it was Julio Pabón, according to the book he just published, who was the one to get Fidel Castro to come to the Bronx.

Could you imagine, my dear reader, for all these 20-plus years, I had believed that it was Congressman Serrano who was responsible for the Dictator's visit to Bronx County?

As a matter of fact, during the Dictator's visit, I organized and participated in various demonstrations against Fidel Castro and Congressman Serrano.

I remember many meetings I have had with my friend Carlos Barberia, the great Cuban composer and director of "Orquesta Kubavana" regarding Fidel Castro's visit and how Congressman Serrano dared to invite him to Bronx County.

Since Castro's visit to the South Bronx, my personal relationship with Congressman Serrano has not been the best. I felt offended, insulted and humiliated by the Dictator's visit, and there were many times that I considered challenging José Serrano for his seat in the US Congress. And all of that was because Fidel Castro visited the Bronx.

Now, 21 years later, I just learned that it was not Congressman Serrano who brought Fidel Castro to visit Bronx County, but it was Julio Pabón.

It is also important for you to know that I met Julio Pabón back in 1975 when we were both students at Herbert H. Lehman College in the Bronx. Julio Pabón was always what I considered to be a lefty radical; and to the contrary, I was and remain a Pro-Statehood supporter, following those leaders who want Puerto Rico to become the 51st State of our Nation.

Julio Pabón used to follow the teachings of Ruben Berríos, Juan Mari Brás and the leaders of the Independent Party. Unlike him, I still follow the teachings of the leaders of Statehood.

During those years, The President of Lehman College was Dr. Leonard Lief; Dr. Trina Rivera de Ríos was the Director of the Bilingual Program; and Maria Herencia, Lehman College's first Hispanic Dean, who then served as Lehman's Financial Counselor.

I recall one occasion during my college days when Julio Pabón and his friends took over Schuster Hall. They chained the doors of every entrance and exit, disrupting education, and not allowing anyone to come in or out for days. I remember how food was delivered to them with ropes from the ground to the roof.

That incident caught the attention of every authority in the City and every student at the college.

Since that time, Julio Pabón has run for various political positions in Bronx County. He has been involved in sports. He was an assistant to Congressman Serrano, but I never knew him to be an historian nor a writer, as he has now revealed in his published book, "Knockout: Fidel Castro Visits The South Bronx" which you can get at <http://www.knockoutthebook.com/>.

His book provides a good education for someone like me who may have been mistaken about who was the leader, the organizer and the perpetrator who dared to bring Fidel Castro into the Bronx.

As you know, the politics during those times were more conservative compared to the liberalism of today where everything is allowed and permitted.

It is ironic, or just maybe luck, that a few days before Fidel Castro finally died, Julio Pabón released his book to educate us about his role in bringing the Cuban Dictator to the one and only visit he ever paid to the South Bronx. So now you know the rest of the story.

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