



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Ruben Diaz

All for One and One for All! The Three Musketeers To The Rescue

RUBEN DIAZ March 7, 2014

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WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

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You should know that on March 4, 2014, Albany experienced one of its best moments.

New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio traveled to Albany to stage what he had hoped to be a show of force to demand Governor Andrew Cuomo's approval for tax hikes on wealthy New Yorkers to fund Universal Pre-K – believing he could force the Governor into a “jaque mate” – checkmate. That same day, another education battle took place, where CEO and Success Academy Founder and President Eva Moskowitz also traveled to Albany to fight for the right for charter schools to co-exist in public school buildings – something Mayor de Blasio

opposes.

You should know that with less than two weeks' notice, Eva Moskowitz gave her marching orders and mobilized an army of 11,000 parents and students to travel to Albany to counter-attack Mayor de Blasio. On the other side of the battleground, union members served as Mayor de Blasio's troops, totaling about one thousand.

The spectacle was unimaginable.

You should know that Mayor de Blasio's trusted advisors and wartime consigliere seriously underestimated the influence and the power of convocation of "General" Eva Moskowitz. Her charter school battle caused a huge defeat to Mayor de Blasio, causing him to retreat back to New York City to plan his next strategy.

We all know that this war is not over, and we all know that Mayor de Blasio "will be back."

My dear reader, it was incredible to witness the scene of 11,000 people dressed with yellow t-shirts (over their winter coats) taking over the streets of Albany, drawing great admiration and deep sympathy from almost everyone who saw them. 11,000 Black and Hispanic parents and children braved Albany's cold weather in desperation and with determination to protect and fight for justice for the children's education. This was all the result of the announcement that Mayor de Blasio wanted to stop their progress in charter schools and basically thrown them into the streets.

It is important for you to know that charter schools are mainly located in minority communities and that these schools are mainly attended by Black and Hispanic children. Charter schools and school vouchers were instituted to give parents of minority children help so they could give their children a good and decent education.

I remember back to those years when Reverend Floyd Flake from Queens, Reverend Wyatt Tee Walker from Manhattan, and I got together to fight with our minority legislators so they would establish and pass laws to create charter schools in New York State. I was not even an elected official when we created the Canaan Charter School in Harlem. Since that time, I have remained a staunch advocate and a defender of charter schools and school vouchers. I believe they are a godsend to our communities.

It is heartbreaking for me to see a Democratic Mayor, along with some Democratic elected officials, trying to stop progress and educational opportunities that charter schools give to Black and Hispanic parents so their children can get a good education. Instead of stopping this progress, I believe we Democrats should be fighting to open more of them to be sure that every child gets that opportunity.

You and I know that for many years, we complained about how the system and culture only gave opportunities to others, while our children were left behind. Now that opportunities have been given to our children, this progress should be expanded. You don't stop progress – especially when that progress has been given to our Black and Hispanic children!

As you all know, I have been a loud critic of Governor Andrew Cuomo, mainly because I did not agree with the way he treated our communities and I did not see him protecting the people in our communities.

However, after seeing Governor Andrew Cuomo step into the cold on March 4th to stand among the 11,000 parents and children from the City of New York, and to promise us all that he will be sure that none of them are thrown into the streets and none of them will stop getting a good education, I have to say loud and clear: Thank you, Governor Andrew Cuomo. I also have to take my hat off to Senate Leaders Dean Skelos and Jeff Klein.

Ladies and gentlemen, those three leaders came out like the Three Musketeers, with their swords and fists in the air, fighting for the honor and dignity of our minority students. They gave all those parents hope and let them know that the trip to Albany was not in vain.

Out of the Three Musketeers I, have yet to find out which one is Athos, Porthos and Aramis, but time will tell.

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