



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Ruben Diaz

The Rebirth of The Bronx

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WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

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The Rebirth of The Bronx

You should know that on Monday, April 28th, the New York State Senate – in a Resolution introduced by Senator Jeff Klein – recognized and honored the County of the Bronx for the second year in a row. Under the coordination of Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz, Jr., Assemblyman Mark Gjonaj and Senator Jeff Klein, the Bronx has become a hot topic in Albany.

You should also know that for this celebration, hundreds and hundreds of people – including many senior citizens, community leaders, and business leaders - came to enjoy music and share special moments with the Bronx delegation here in Albany. Even the Coquitos Frios came to Albany to give us all a taste of the Bronx!

But you should know that it was not always like this. Once upon a time, not too many years ago, the Bronx was a virtual laughing stock, and the place everyone pointed to just to show what was wrong with the United States of America.

Politicians who were looking to make names for themselves came to the South Bronx to use the pain and suffering and decay of our community as their personal stepping stone to advance their own agendas. Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, Ted Kennedy, and others – they all came to the South Bronx to tell the rest of the nation that they, if elected, would save the rest of the nation from becoming another South Bronx that looked like a war zone – like Germany during the Second World War.

Hollywood came to exploit South Bronx neighborhoods to film some very hostile and disgusting movies. “Fort Apache, The Bronx” starring Paul Newman and Rachel Ticoten showed the nation what a drug-infested area the Bronx was. “The Bonfire of the Vanities,” starring Tom Hanks as a white millionaire who was lost in the Bronx, showed the decay of the area. And “Wolfen,” a 1981 crime horror movie, is also on the list of movies filmed in the Bronx to depict the devastation and lawlessness of the Bronx.

You should know that during those times, mostly every building in the South Bronx was burned to the ground. There were empty lots and rubbish everywhere.

Properties that were abandoned by their owners forced the City of New York to take them back, and giving our forsaken property for \$1 to anyone who wanted them – no questions asked. It was a free-for-all. Only Riverdale stood up in the Bronx, and that was off-limits to the rest of us.

Businesses fled from the Bronx. Banks red-lined the South Bronx, and only desolation remained. The Bronx was painted as a place ravaged by poverty and drugs, filled with

criminals and prostitutes. Residents had to abandon their homes because there was no place to live in peace.

After those years of chaos and neglect and forcing residents and businesses out of the area, a new Bronx has rebirthed. Now, the properties that the City once gave away for \$1 are almost impossible for common people to own. Millionaires and developers with big money are just about the only ones who can afford to purchase property in the Bronx. There are new buildings and new businesses, and the Bronx has become the Mecca of the health-care industry.

The Bronx Borough President and the Elected Officials of the County have been working very hard and now businesses are opening everywhere and competing against each other to do business in the Bronx.

Donald Trump is opening the Trump Golf Links at Ferry Point. Fresh Direct is opening in Port Morris. NHL great Mark Messier is coming to open the biggest ice skating rink in Kingsbridge. A three-story Macy's is opening in Co-op City. A Marriott hotel is opening in the Hutchinson Metro Center, and an L.A. Fitness Center will be there, too. Major League Soccer will have a new home in the Bronx. In a few more years, the Bronx will be THE tourist attraction in New York City, with the lowest unemployment rate in all five boroughs.

But as I said before, my dear reader, it was not always like this. We must never forget the leaders, the residents and the few businesses that stood fighting and refused to move. Those are our heroes and heroines in the rebirth of the new Bronx.

Ladies and gentlemen, like the Phoenix, a new Bronx has risen from the ashes!

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

