



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Ruben Diaz

Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins to be Honored at the African-American Abrazo

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February 10, 2015

What You Should Know

By State Senator Rev. Rubén Díaz

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You should know that since 1976 when United States President Gerald Ford declared the month of February as Black History Month, every U.S. President since has followed suit, giving all Americans, elected officials and organizations one full month to host events and activities that recognize distinguished members of the African-American community.

As you know, during my years in the New York State Senate, I have created annual

events called Abrazos." (Abrazo means embrace.) I do this every year to celebrate various communities during their special months, and at each event, distinguished leaders are honored.

I have held the Abrazo Boricua in New York each June to celebrate the Puerto Rican community and heritage. Each July, the Abrazo Dominicano in New York celebrates the attributes of the Dominican Republic's culture and community. During the spring, the Abrazo Garifuna in New York honors the traditions that come from West Africa, Arawak, and the Caribbean - and the Abrazo Bangladesh in New York honors the many contributions of the Bangladeshi society.

In February - Black History Month - the African-Americana Abrazo celebrates the contributions and history of the African-American community. This year, Assemblymen Marcos Crespo, Luis Sepulveda and Michael Blake have joined me to officially be part of all of the Abrazos. We have chosen Friday, February 20, 2015 to celebrate the African-American Abrazo.

Each of us has chosen one member of the African-American community to honor at our banquet that will be attended by 500 guests. (This event is by invitation-only.)

You should know that my honoree is the distinguished Senator from Yonkers: New York State Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins, who just happens to be the first African-American woman ever chosen to be the Leader of the Senate Democratic Conference in Albany. Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins has made history as the first African-American woman to lead a Conference in the New York State Legislature.

Assemblyman Luis Sepulveda has chosen Ms. Neva Shillingford-King to be his honoree. Ms. Shillingford-King is the Executive Vice President of 1199 SEIU, and one of the most powerful women in New York. She is also the wife of New York City Councilman Andy King.

Assemblyman Marcos Crespo has selected Rev. Dimas Salaberrios, an African-American minister as his honoree. Rev. Salaberrios works with the youth in the Bronx River Housing Development, and serves as the President of the Concerts of Prayer Greater New York.

Assemblyman Michael Blake's honoree is Mr. Abraham Jones, the Executive Director

at Claremont Neighborhood Centers, Inc.

It is important for you to know that the 2015 African-American Abrazo will be held on Friday, February 20th at Maestro's Caterer (located at 1703 Bronxdale Avenue) where the three Assemblymen Marcos Crespo, Luis Sepulveda and Michael Blake - and myself - will gather to honor four hardworking and inspiring members of New York's African-American community.

Ladies and gentlemen, as a proud Hispanic, I have to say that it is a great honor for me to join my colleagues in coordinating the 2015 African-American Abrazo to celebrate Black History Month and recognize the contributions of four of our great leaders.

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