



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Ruben Diaz

## NYC Comptroller Scott Stringer, NYC Department of Homeless Services, NYC Police Department, and Acacia Network are Opening Themselves Up for a Lawsuit

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| ISSUE: **HOUSING**

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

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**NYC Comptroller Scott Stringer, NYC Department of Homeless Services, NYC Police Department, and Acacia Network are Opening Themselves Up for a Lawsuit**

You should know that this past Friday, November 13, 2015, a woman who resides at the homeless shelter located at 941 Intervale Avenue, Bronx, New York, was reportedly stabbed by a resident of the same shelter. The shelter, which is run by Acacia Network is across the street, right in front of my District Office.

According to reports and statements people have given me, the perpetrator was caught on tape breaking the security cameras in the homeless shelter during the weekend (November 7 - 8) before Friday's stabbing.

The assailant's vandalism did not come to Acacia's attention until Monday, November 9, because no one on Acacia's staff took a look at the cameras over the weekend. On Tuesday, November 10th, Acacia's staff reported the destroyed cameras to the police, providing copies of the video tapes to the 41st Precinct, with footage of the suspect smashing the security cameras.

Even though Acacia gave this information to the police, the perpetrator was not questioned or arrested until after Friday's stabbing took place.

The family shelter residents at 941 Intervale Avenue went unprotected for a whole week without their building's security cameras working, and with no one to check for their safety.

It is important for you to know that this shelter, run by Acacia Network, has been the subject of controversy for some time. Before Acacia, this shelter was run by Aguila, Inc. The NYC Department of Homeless Services took the contract away from Aguila in order to reduce costs, and transferred the shelter to the Acacia Network.

In February, 2015, the Acacia Network submitted a contract to the NYC Department of Homeless Services for services to be provided to the homeless families including security.

Nine months later, that contract continues to flounder somewhere between the NYC Department of Homeless Services and NYC Comptroller Scott Stringer's office, leaving the residents of 941 Intervale Avenue without the proper security and services they need. This situation has forced Acacia Network to borrow money in order to even try to provide minor security services for the families in that shelter, such as staff to check security cameras. Without these services, the residents are subject to danger and violence.

We all know, and it has been widely reported, that NYC Comptroller Scott Stringer is refusing to sign many contracts, forcing organizations throughout the City, such as Acacia

Network, to cut services or to borrow money from banks, paying interest and incurring extra expenses which the City of New York may never pay back.

As you can see, my dear reader, the incident in which a woman was stabbed, could have been avoided:

1. If Acacia Network had been able to do their job and hire the security personnel in order to have someone to check the cameras round-the-clock and provide actual and real security to the shelter residents, and not have to wait for a few days before checking their broken cameras;
2. If the NYPD had acted promptly on the report they received showing the perpetrator on the video destroying the security cameras at 941 Intervale Avenue. We all know that people who destroy a security camera do so for a reason, often to prevent a future crime from being recorded;
3. If the City of New York's Department of Homeless Services had been responsible and diligent, knowing that if an agency does not have a properly and officially executed contract, that agency, under their supervision, will not have the necessary resources to provide the needed services that homeless families deserve. If the Department of Homeless Services knew that, they should have had emergency funds available and not have to force the agency to borrow money;
4. If the NYC Comptroller Mr. Scott Stronger stopped holding up contracts to agencies, placing homeless families in situations where their lives, services and protection are put in jeopardy. He should not have waited 9 months for an incident like the stabbing of this woman to realize that agencies need resources in order to protect the homeless.

You should all know that this mess could have been avoided, and this woman who was stabbed would not be suffering today if all of the agencies mentioned above would have

done their part.

You should also know that if I were a relative of the woman who was stabbed, I would be taking her to consult a lawyer to see what her options are.

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