



Illustrious Lifetime Achievement Awards

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The Institute for Latino Studies at Berkeley College presents *The Illustrious Lifetime Achievement Awards* to iconic Latinos who have attained the highest degree of recognition in their fields, with exemplary record of sustained contribution; achieved in such prominence and stature that the recipient has positively impacted and contributed to society over time.

The Illustrious Lifetime Achievement Award 2018 goes to four iconic figures who have made a permanent impact in the legacy of Latinos in the Western Hemisphere and beyond:

- An educational trailblazer credited for establishing Latino studies, research institutions and channels of access to higher education for thousands;
- A music icon who has always nurtured and adorned the musical landscape of Latin America and beyond, becoming 'La voz de Puerto Rico',
- An international humanist who has dedicated his life to the struggle for social justice, and
- A troubled youth who became a pastor, who became a politician, and became a legend.



Late Frank Bonilla
Ph.D.



Danny Rivera
Singer/Songwriter



Ramón Antonio Veras
Esq.



Ruben Díaz, Sr.
NYC Councilman

Lifetime Achievement Award - In Memoriam

Leadership in Education

Frank Bonilla, Ph.D., was born in New York in 1925 to parents who relocated to the mainland from Puerto Rico. Frank Bonilla grew up in East Harlem and the Bronx, spending several of his middle and high school years in Tennessee and Illinois. He was drafted into the US Army, served with the 190th Infantry Regiment, the 65th Infantry, and fought in World War II's Battle of the Bulge.

He earned a doctorate in Sociology from Harvard University in 1959.

Bonilla began his academic career in 1960 as a member of The American Universities Field Service in Latin America. Starting with a project initiative on behalf of UNESCO and the Economic Commission for Latin America, his research for the next three years in Argentina, Chile, Mexico, and Brazil focused on the relationship between social development and education in Latin America.

As Director of the only university-based institute in the United States devoted to the interdisciplinary study of the Puerto Rican experience, Bonilla oversaw research in history, political economy, demographic transitions, and social and cultural development.

Though formally retired by the late 1990s, Dr. Bonilla continued to emphasize the importance of promoting Latino academic and policy research capabilities and bringing Latino voices and perspectives into the U.S. foreign policy arena.

He remained an active member of many organizations and continued to publish and spearhead numerous initiatives well into the new millennium. He passed on December 28, 2010.

He was one of the greatest pioneering educators, and visionaries of our time; with his work and relentless commitment to higher education and Latino Studies he changed the lives of many.

- For being one of the greatest intellectuals dedicated to scholarship about immigration, Puerto Ricans and Latinos in the American Continent;
- For being a renowned pioneer in the establishment of Puerto Rican and Latino Studies;

- For his many contributions of outstanding significance to Academia, including his unparalleled dedication to mentor students and scholars until and after they graduated from college or succeeded at completing their research studies;
- For creating the first consortium for Latino studies in the United States, if not in the Americas;
- For being a distinguished true visionary whose intellectual contributions remain indelible to guide the trajectory of present and future generations of scholars;
- For attaining excellence in educational leadership; and,
- For being one of the most prominent, quintessential educators, and scholars of our time;

The Institute for Latino Studies at Berkeley College is honored to bestow *The Illustrious Leadership in Education Lifetime Achievement Award In-Memoriam* upon the late Dr. Frank Bonilla.

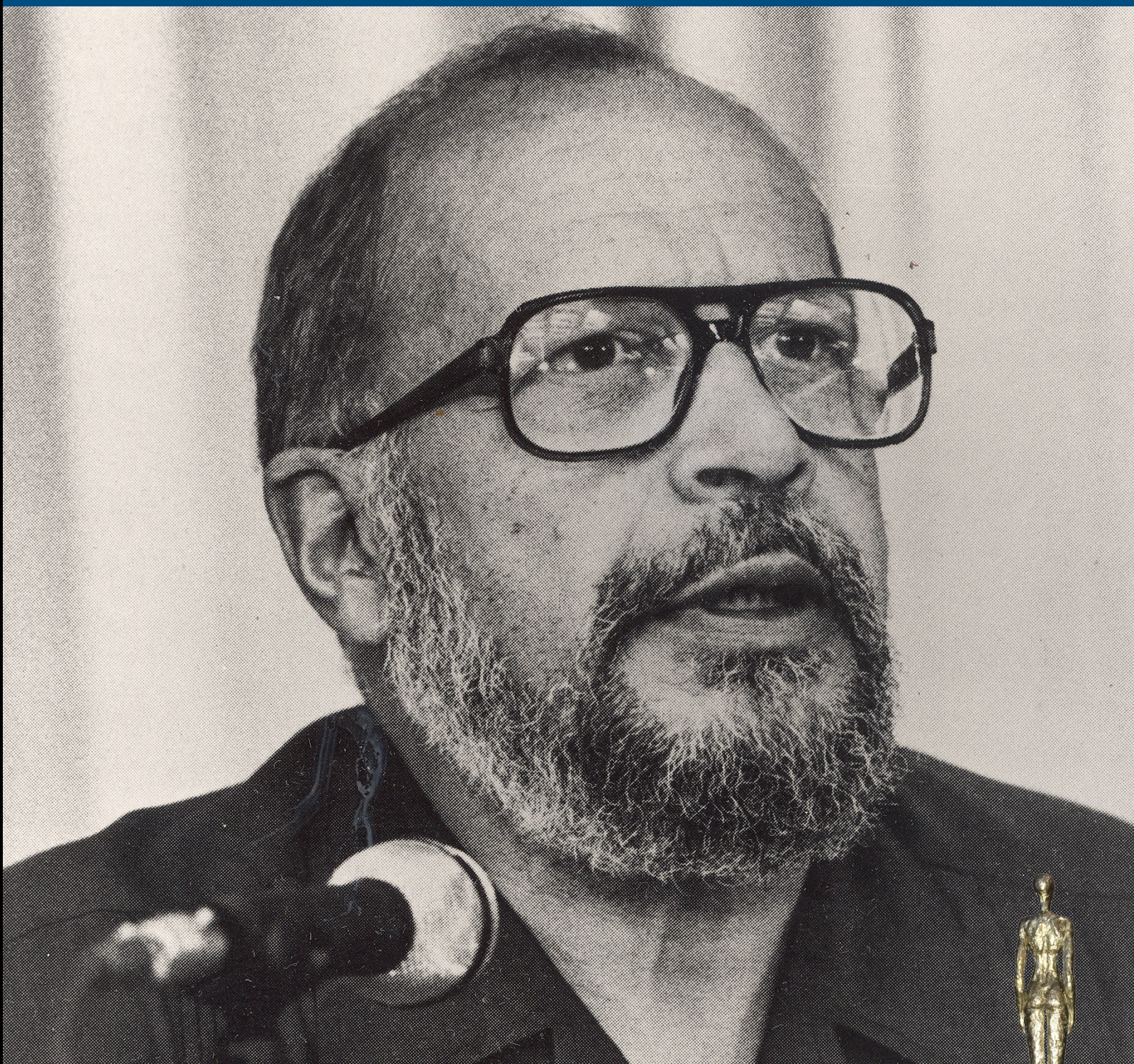


Guide to the Frank Bonilla Papers



Archives of the Puerto Rican Diaspora
Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños
Hunter College, CUNY
2180 Third Avenue @ 119th St., Rm. 120
New York, New York 10035
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Lifetime Achievement Award - In Memoriam



Late Frank Bonilla, Ph.D.

Founder Director

**Centro Para Estudios Puertorriqueños
Hunter College of The City University of New York**

The Illustrious Awards

Photo credit: The Records of the Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños, Archives of the Puerto Rican Diaspora, Center for Puerto Rican Studies, Hunter College, CUNY.

Illustrious Lifetime Achievement Award

Social Justice

Ramón Antonio Veras "El Negro Veras", was born on December 25, 1938 in Santiago de los Caballeros, Dominican Republic.

He completed elementary and high school studies at Escuela Paraguay, Academia Santiago, and Liceo Nocturno Salvador Cucurullo.

He attained a Juris Doctor degree from Universidad Autónoma de Santo Domingo, graduating Magna Cum Laude in 1967. He has been a practicing attorney since that time in criminal, civil, and labor law, as councilor to guilds, organizations and labor unions.

Dr. Veras' participation and contributions in the international arena includes membership in the Presidencia del Consejo Mundial de la Paz (World Peace Council) and Tribunal Antimperialista de Nuestra América (Anti-Imperialist Tribunal of Our America). Nationally, he has presided over Comité Dominicano de la Paz (Dominican Committee for Peace); Comité de Acción por la Moralidad Pública (Action Committee for Public Morality); Comité de Solidaridad con Haití (Solidarity with Haiti Committee); Comité Amigos de Cuba (Friends of Cuba Committee); and Comité de Solidaridad con Corea (Solidarity with Korea Committee). He is a founding member of the Asociación de Abogados de Santiago, which he presided over on two occasions.

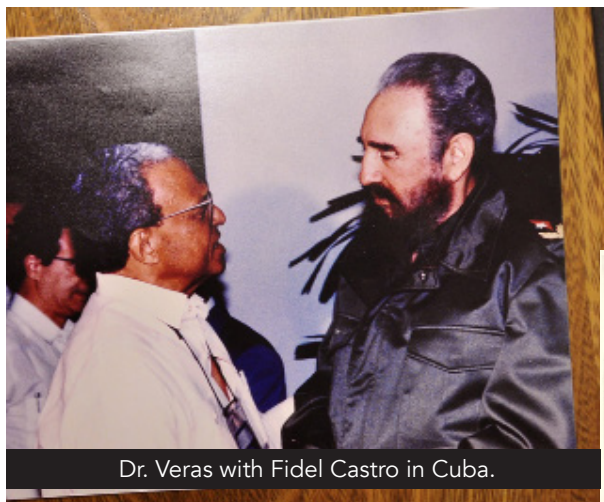
Dr. Veras has lectured extensively - in his native Dominican Republic, Haití, USA, including Puerto Rico, Panamá, México, Nicaragua, Cuba, Spain, Italy, USSR, Poland, Czechoslovakia, France, Bulgaria, Libia and Germany - on diverse subjects including human rights; migration in Latin America and the Caribbean; the arms race; freedom; corruption as a social phenomenon; national and international narcotraffic; peace and the arms race; and child abuse.

A prolific writer, Dr. Veras has published nine books, and has thirty-eight unedited books. His collection of more than 2,000 articles, written between 1969 and 2007, can be found at the DR National Archives, in the Fondo Doctor Ramón Antonio Veras.

"El Negro Veras" has the historical distinction of being a surviving leader of the *Panfleteros de Santiago*, a group of youngsters who were made martyrs after being jailed, tortured, assassinated, cut in pieces and disappeared in 1960, following an act of resistance against the dictatorship of Rafael Leonidas Trujillo in the Dominican Republic. They had the audacity to disseminate in Santiago a pamphlet deriding the dictator. The pamphlet noted: **Con el perdón de la Expresión, Trujillo es una mierda (With apologies to the expression: Trujillo is a piece of shit).**

- For his professional achievements and social legacy;
- For a lifetime of exemplary life;
- For his relentless humanitarian efforts for the socio-economic and political empowerment of Dominicans, in particular, and peoples of the world;
- For his rich intellectual contribution to our collective social conscience in his writings, books, and lectures;
- For being a man of character and conviction who has earned the respect and admiration of contemporaneous society;
- For the historical role life has led him to play in society;
- For becoming a humanist leader of social conscience who serves as a historical and contemporary marker of what's right and wrong;

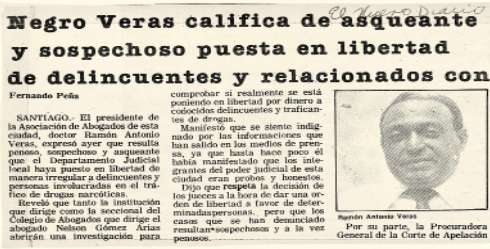
The Institute for Latino Studies at Berkeley College is pleased to bestow *The Illustrious Social Justice Lifetime Achievement Award* upon Dr. Ramón Antonio Veras (El Negro Veras).



Dr. Veras with Fidel Castro in Cuba.



Dr. Veras & Wife in Belgrado



Illustrious Lifetime Achievement Award

Premio por Logros de Trayectoria de Vida

- Por sus logros profesionales y legado social;
- Por una trayectoria de vida ejemplar e intachable;
- Por sus incansables esfuerzos a favor del apoderamiento socio-económico y político de los dominicanos en particular, y otros pueblos del mundo;
- Por su contribución intelectual a la conciencia social colectiva en artículos, libros y presentaciones;
- Por ser un hombre digno, de carácter firme y convicción profunda que se ha ganado el respeto y admiración de la sociedad contemporánea;
- Por el papel histórico que la vida le ha llevado a desempeñar en la sociedad;
- Por haberse convertido en un líder humanista de conciencia que ha jugado un papel estelar, como uno de los máximos referentes históricos y contemporáneos de la moralidad social;

El Instituto Para Estudios Latinos de la universidad Berkeley College se complace en presentar *El Premio Ilustre por Logros de Trayectoria de Vida en Justicia Social* al Dr. Ramón Antonio Veras (El Negro Veras).



Dr. Veras and Wife in Korea.



Ramón Antonio -Negro- Veras



Parte de mi vida:
para mis hijos, nietas y nietos

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Illustrious Lifetime Achievement Award

Music

Danny Rivera was born in 1945 in Santurce, a vicinity of San Juan, Puerto Rico. He began his prolific artistic career at age 5, singing on a kitchen table at the request of his father and for the amusement of neighbors. He followed up singing in the choir of his mother's evangelical church, in bars of his neighborhood, and with barrel drums playing and singing *bomba & plena* in the streets of San Juan.

In 1968, he was chosen as the Revelation of the Year becoming a regular participant of festivals and maintaining a continuous exposure on radio and television. In the 1970s, he achieved popularity in all Latin América, and also in Puerto Rico as he became an emblematic figure of the bohemia era by regularly performing at the Ocho Puertas nightclub in El Viejo San Juan.

His successful showcasing of talent as a singer, songwriter and political activist spans over half a century. His portfolio lists innumerable presentations around Latin America and mainland USA, including in the famous Carnegie Hall in New York, and Centro de Bellas Artes in San Juan. He has recorded over 70 albums. His repertoire includes hits such "Jesucristo," "Amor, Amor," "Porque yo te amo," "Fuiste mía un verano," "Manolo," "Mi viejo," "Yo y la rosa," "Va cayendo una lágrima," "Mi Hijo," "Tu Pueblo es mi Pueblo," "Amada Amante," "Alborada," "Serenata," and among many others, "Madrigal." His fame reached such heights that he was baptized 'La Voz de Puerto Rico' ('Puerto Rico's National Voice.')

As his stature as a popular singer grew beyond his native land, Danny Rivera had a calling: utilizing his talent to work on social, spiritual, and historical endeavors; gradually becoming devoted almost completely to social causes.

In the summer of 2001, he spent thirty days in a US federal prison in Guaynabo, Puerto Rico, charged with civil disobedience for protesting against the US Navy occupation of the Puerto Rican Island of Vieques.

The painful experience of witnessing much of his work, recordings, films, videos, printed media, entire discography and archives set on fire, marked him with lasting effect. Such devastation is believed to have been inflicted upon him, as retaliation for his public positions regarding Puerto Rico's political status, and speaking out about the sale of the Puerto Rican Telephone Company.

Rather than crumbling by the experience, Rivera turned to establishing new relationships in friendly neighboring countries in the Caribbean. In 2004, he inaugurated the International School of Plastic and Musical Arts, in Havana,

Cuba, and partnered in making a documentary about Puerto Rican cultural presence in eastern Cuba.

He dedicated time to improving the socio-economic living conditions of the people of Dajabon, a dirt-poor town at the border of Haiti and the Dominican Republic. As a result, he was invited to become a naturalized citizen of the Dominican Republic, which he did in 2008.

Danny Rivera is a man of character and conscience who dreams of a happy and prosperous Puerto Rico. Today, at age 73, he resides in the Dominican Republic, practicing what he knows best, a simple life doing good to others and totally dedicated to living a full life.

- For dedicating his talent to entertain and uplift millions of fans in Latin America and around the world;
- For being an ambassador and advocate for the preservation of his native country's musical traditions and culture;
- For being a conscientious man of faith who truly cares about humanity and feels an integral part of it;
- For being a true example of a leader whose commitment to justice and freedom does not waiver in the presence of adversity;
- For dedicating his life to peace and empowering causes;
- For making his activism and convictions indelible part of social conscience in Puerto Rico and Latin America; and,
- For his rich legacy and contribution to the world,

The Board of Directors of the Institute for Latino Studies at Berkeley College presents the Lifetime Achievement Award in Music, to the Illustrious and beloved Danny Rivera.



Illustrious Lifetime Achievement Award



ILS INSTITUTE FOR
LATINO STUDIES
at Berkeley College

Danny Rivera

Photo by Marisol Diaz, 2014

Illustrious Lifetime Achievement Award

Political Pioneering

Ruben Díaz, Sr.'s official biography indicates he was born on April 22, 1943 in Bayamón, Puerto Rico, and attended the Miguel Such Vocational School in Río Piedras. In 1960, at the tender age of 17, he was destitute and desperate to change his life. Looking for way out, he joined the U.S. Armed Forces and proudly served in the Army, completed his tour of duty and was honorable discharged in 1963.

When Dr. María Teresa and Néstor Montilla Sr., interviewed him for the Illustrious Awards at Hostos Community College, he described his life as a poignant story. He pieced together, in Spanish, testimonies describing an individual who was born to fail and die young. A maternal orphan at age 9, his life evolved as a down spiral rollercoaster with a sure tragic ending. Early in life, he grew into social vices, drugs, alcohol, and street crime to the point of being named 'Satan'.

Rather than learning self-control and discipline and developing character as a soldier, the blatant and repetitive acts of discrimination and humiliation in the Army for being black and Puerto Rican, hardened and made him bitter. At 20 years of age, he returned to Puerto Rico from the military service, determined to kill or be killed.

Wavering his arms and gesturing with face and shoulders, he described himself as a street beggar who had reached the bottom of the barrel. "A mi me llamaban satánico en Bayamón... me llamaban Satan. Yo era satánico. Yo era malo" (I was referred to as a satanic soul in Bayamón. People called me Satan. I was satanic. I was very bad).

Rejected by his family and afflicted by rampant racism, he felt as an outcast in his own native country; somehow, he managed to escape the island. He hopped on a plane and came to New York in 1965.

"Yo vine con un mosquero a New York." (I was in total disarray when I came to New York), he shared.

His life in the Big Apple of the mid 1960s, in the midst of the Civil Rights movement, sunk deeper into drugs, crime and despair until one day, at 590 Sutter Ave., Brooklyn, NY, at a shooting gallery, his shooting buddy overdosed. He carried this friend's lifeless body through the streets of Brooklyn when he stumbled upon a group of worshiping and praying African-American Pentecostal women, who asked him to bring the body into the church and lay it on a bench. They prayed and laid hands on the body, and the man came back to life. This was Ruben Díaz, Sr. 'come to Jesus' moment, literally. The rest is history.

He went on with his life and decided to go to college. He attended Herbert H. Lehman College, obtaining a Bachelor's Degree in 1976, and the Damascus Bible Institute, graduating with a Theological Degree.

In 1977, in the basement of the Church of God on Seward Avenue, Reverend Díaz founded, and was until recently, Executive Director of, the Christian Community Benevolent Association,

Inc., which presently employs 1000 people and serves more than 5000 senior citizens residing in Bronx County. Reverend Díaz also founded, and is the Pastor of, the Christian Community Neighborhood Church.

In 1978, he became a man of the cloth, after being ordained Minister of the Church of God, headquartered in Cleveland, Tennessee.

In 1993, Reverend Díaz, Sr. was appointed to serve on the New York City Civilian Complaint Review Board. In that capacity, he served the people of the City of New York for three years, investigating allegations of police brutality and misconduct.

In 1997, Reverend Díaz, Sr. received an honorary Doctorate Degree in Humanities, bestowed upon him for his tireless humanitarian work by the National Evangelical University of the Dominican Republic (Universidad Nacional Evangélica de la República Dominicana).

He was elected to the New York City Council in 2001, representing the 18th District in the Bronx. During his swearing-in ceremony, Reverend Díaz, Sr. conducted the first Pentecostal religious service ever held inside City Hall. The sermon was delivered by Bishop Ephraim Navas González, Superintendent of the Northeastern District of the Church of God.

In November 2002, he was elected to the New York State Senate, where he served along fourteen years until 2017. He decided to return to the New York City Council to represent the South Bronx, and won that seat in 2018.

Rev. Ruben Díaz, Sr. has made history as a successful politician and the first US Latino Pastor to crossover from religion into politics, following in the steps of many African-American reverends/politicians.

Reverend Díaz is the proud father of three children: Damaris Díaz Kiely, a retired Sergeant in the New York Police Department; Samuel Díaz, who works for the New York City Housing Authority; and Bronx Borough President Rubén Díaz, Jr. He is also the proud grandfather of six grandchildren, and is happily married to Leslie Yvette Díaz.

"I am extremely proud of my father. I love my father. My father is a general," said Ruben Díaz, Jr. during an interview with Dr. María Teresa and Néstor Montilla Sr. "I am proud of him because he has been able to persevere and stay true to



Illustrious Lifetime Achievement Award



Ruben Díaz, Jr.

his commitment to the community. I am proud of him because he has always been there for his family. I am proud of my Dad because he has been able to cultivate and nurture the future leadership that we are going to need to make the Bronx and New York City move forward.”

At 75, Rev. Ruben Díaz, Sr. self-describes as a success, as a man of faith, as a politician, as a father, and as a man who has accomplished much more than what he imagined possible.

As small and insignificant as a mustard seed planted on bad soil, Ruben Díaz, Sr. grew up into a powerful tree that offers thick shade to those in need, and bears rich, nurturing and lasting fruit, such as, hopefully, the first Latino Mayor of the City of New York.

- For being a resilient, relentless, and passionate individual, who overcame the worst of life conditions to become an accomplished and cherished man, both in personal and public life;
- For being the first US Latino Pastor to cross-over from religion into politics, following in the steps of many African American Reverend/Politicians;
- For being a renowned pioneer in the establishment of faith-based, non-profit community organizations; and
- For being a visionary, whose religious, social and political contributions remain to guide the trajectory of Latino Evangelicals in the United States;

The Institute for Latino Studies at Berkeley College is pleased to bestow The Illustrious Lifetime Achievement Award in Political Pioneering upon Rev. Ruben Díaz, Sr.



The Illustrious Awards

Illustrious Awards 2018



Ruben Diaz, Jr.
BOROUGH PRESIDENT



OFFICE OF THE BRONX BOROUGH PRESIDENT

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Bronx, New York 10451

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September 14, 2018

Dear Friends,

It is my pleasure to recognize the Illustrious Awards 2018, an event that allows us to reflect and be proud of all that your organization and its members have accomplished through the years.

This wonderful event offers us a chance to recognize your organization's efforts and commitment to create and sustain a supportive community for the Hispanic community throughout The Bronx, New York City and across the region. Over the years, your organization has actively promoted and advanced the achievements of your community while providing support for the next generation of Hispanic leaders that will help The Bronx continue its prosperity and upward trend.

Our great borough is striving to reach its full potential, and organizations such as yours have played a key role in our success, aiding in our great transformative change The Bronx has seen in recent years, helping with our economic growth as well as the historic decreases in crime and unemployment rates that have occurred since I took office in 2009. I look forward to helping your organization continue its mission of focusing on the importance of reading to students throughout our great borough and beyond.

I congratulate all of this year's honorees – particularly my father, Ruben Diaz Sr., who will be receiving a Lifetime Achievement Award – who will be honored for devoting countless hours to helping those in need as well as helping our borough and our city continue to grow strong. Your honorees are true exemplars of excellence and I offer my most heartfelt congratulations for their achievements and outstanding work.

On behalf of the more than 1.4 million residents of The Bronx, I salute the Institute for Latino Studies and wish you continued success.

Sincerely,

Ruben Diaz, Jr.