

## On AIR



# THE BRONX TALKS

## ON Bronx Talk AM

Host: GARY AXELBANK

**T**he presidency, education funding and reform, earthquakes in El Salvador and New York, the Rockefeller drug laws, and housing were just some of the topics discussed recently on BronxTalk. Here are excerpts:

**CONGRESSMAN JOSE SERRANO:**

I expect President Bush to wipe his brow and say, "Whoosh! I just made it. Therefore, I should take this 'victory' and be humble about it." My problem is that the leadership of the Republican Party in the House is very conservative, very right wing, and very angry. If they convince him to take a questionable victory and push it down everybody's throat with their policies, he's going to have a hard time governing. If he can convince them, "Listen, we've got a divided country. We have to try to bring people together. Let's understand that we have the people accept us and have the people accept them, and half of those people make their policies. Let's go easy. Let's borrow from their policies also," then he'll be very successful.

Who will govern? Will it be the party or the president? That's the big question.

**JEFF KLEIN, 75TH A.D., ON REFORMING THE BOARD OF EDUCATION:**

I'm awfully tired of mayor after mayor of the City of New York throwing up their hands in despair and saying, "I can't do anything about the Board of Education. It's beyond my control." Let him appoint a commissioner of education that has to go through the city council for confirmation. Give the mayor direct control over the education system. You can't handle the education system in a vacuum. You have to use it as an economical development tool in many cases and other things. It should be a mayoral agency. We talked about it year after year, but nobody wanted this mayor to have control over the education system. Democrats who controlled the Assembly really didn't think that he believed enough in the education system.

Now that's not the case any longer.

**MICHAEL REBELL, CAMPAIGN FOR FISCAL EQUITY:**

We're quite disappointed not only that the Governor saw a need to appeal, but that he did so in a way that really was attacking and distorting Judge DeGrasse. He gave an impression that this is a judge who's looking to micro-manage and somehow interfere with the proper relations between legislative, executive, and judicial branches.

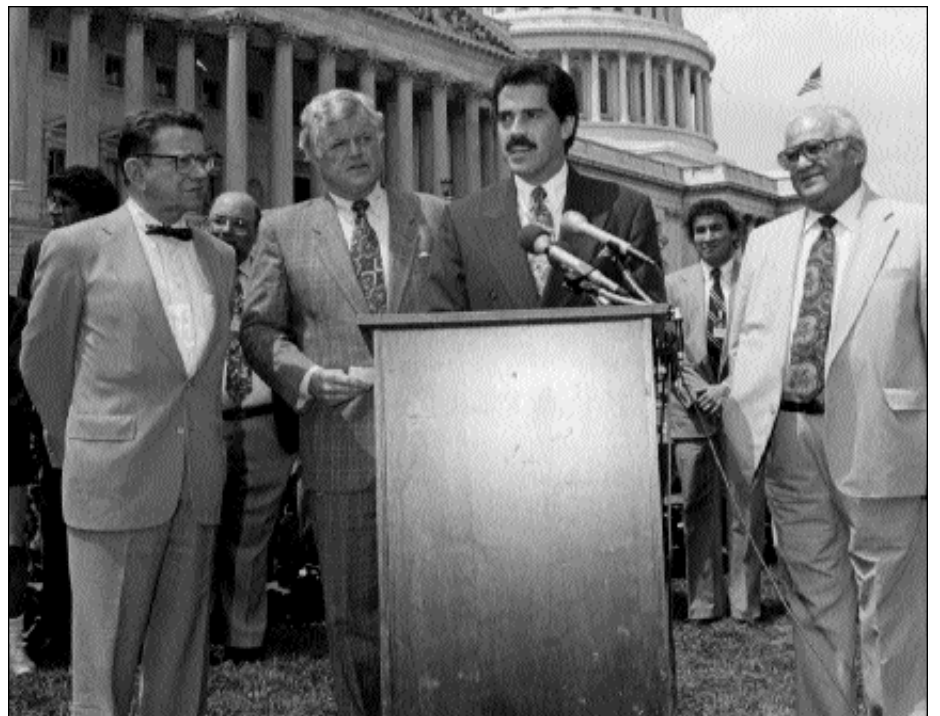
In fact, it's so contrary to that. Justice DeGrasse went out of his way to spell out what the proper legislative role should be. He did not set down the details of a new formula. He did not specify amounts that should go to New York City or any other place. All he did is say, "For too many years, the legislature and the Governor have perpetuated a grossly unconstitutional system, and they've got to get their act together and do it right." He gave them five or six solid parameters for what the constitution requires. Within those parameters, there are a thousand different ways that the legislature and the Governor could put this together. That kind of distortion really did bother me. To make a statement that a judge should not be running the system or should not be writing the formula is just so ludicrous coming from a governor who was a defendant here, precisely for the reason that he's been violating the constitution for ten years.

**RUBEN DIAZ, JR., 75TH A.D., ON THE OPENING OF CYBER CASA:**

In the past, the Bronx has come in last in many categories. But today, we're first. We're leading the City with this. This is the first of its kind. As a politician, we get too accustomed to addressing housing and public assistance. We've done a good job at that. The Borough President, Fernando Ferrer, has done a great job at addressing the housing issues here in the Bronx. But at the same time, we have to understand that in this new information age, we have to step it up a notch. There are other areas, and technology is one of them. I hope to see that many of my colleagues take this back to their community. Everyone could get this done. If I'm a Junior Assembly member, all of the elected officials who have seniority over me certainly have the resources to get something like this put in their district. It's sort of like a friendly challenge to my colleagues.

**MAJORA CARTER, THE POINT CDC, ON HER CANDIDACY FOR CITY COUNCIL:**

My community desperately needs a leader who understands the role that the City Council can play in the lives of the people and the businesses and all the stakeholders in the South Bronx. We really have had a tremendous lack of leadership primarily in land use and how it relates to environmental issues and economic development. We've been looking at environmental abuses of our community for decades at this point. We suffer some of the highest asthma



Congressman José Serrano, during a press conference; to his right, Senator Edward Kennedy

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ma rates in the world and less open space than almost any place else in the City. We have some of the highest unemployment rates in our community. Yet we have some of the most developable land within the South Bronx that actually could be used for some kind of economic sustainable development that doesn't degrade the environment, but also can provide the kind of economic access to the people that live there.

**DR. JOHN CARWAY, VIP COMMUNITY SERVICES, ON GOVERNOR PATAKI'S PROPOSAL TO REFORM THE ROCKEFELLER DRUG LAWS:**

As treatment professionals we heartily welcome the change. It's been a long time coming. For too long, we've put an emphasis on locking people up. The governor, in his statement the last part of the year, mentioned that, "We're locking up more people today than we've ever locked up before: 3.2 million annually. We're not solving a drug problem, we still have a drug problem. So why use a policy which is not serving its purposes?" However, in the governor's budget, substance abuse treatment was cut in terms of funding.

How is he going to fund what will be an increase in the amount of treatment that is needed? He implies that he has ways of doing that. We're hopeful that he does. The whole question is a question of drug policy reform.

That's what is needed today. At least the

governor is taking one step in that direction even though we don't necessarily agree with the way he is formulating it.

**JANET GOLOVNER, KINGSBRIDGE RIVERDALE VAN CORTLANDT DEVELOPMENT CORP., ON A NEW BUILDING ON W. 238TH ST.:**

We have an affordable housing shortage in New York City. Twenty-seven percent of the families renting in New York City face a severe housing hardship. More than 500,000 rental families pay more than half of their gross income for housing. That's really hard. This kind of housing is a solution to this.

**LORRAINE CORTES VAZQUEZ, HISPANIC FEDERATION, ON THE EL SALVADOR EARTHQUAKE:**

The needs are pretty tremendous. We've been very fortunate in that many countries have come to their aid in terms of helping with the rescue missions. Right now what we need is medical supplies and we're also collecting money because we're talking about families who are homeless and who may need items to get shelter and food. Right now, we're asking all New Yorkers who have always been generous in the past. This is a tragedy on a country that's barely recovering from Hurricane Mitch of '98. To have this kind of devastation face the population again is overwhelming. Every dollar helps.