



To: Interested Parties
From: Bronx United
Subject: 2020 NY15 Primary
Date: June 2020

Introduction

The defeat of Ruben Diaz Sr. in the NY-15 primary was a significant achievement and the result of months of work by Bronx United and allies across the country. In the below memo, you will find an overview of those efforts.

The Challenge: Overcoming Essentially 30 Years of Incumbency

Ruben Diaz Sr. is well known in New York City - and even in some national circles - for a well-documented history of bigoted, homophobic, and anti-women statements and policy positions.

However, even with this well-known history, Diaz' decades as a Reverend with church following, years in the State Senate, and time in the City Council afforded him strong name recognition that made him exceptionally formidable.

Bronx United's theory of the case was that much of Diaz Sr.s strength was based on this strong name ID, and that once voters began to hear about how truly terrible Diaz is, that initial strength would recede.

The prospect of allowing Ruben Diaz Sr. to waltz into a Congressional seat based on name ID alone was unacceptable. So in the fall of 2019, Bronx United began to form and formally launched in February 2020 with a video. The goal of Bronx United was simple: build a coalition to oppose Ruben Diaz Sr. - while not backing another candidate - to give someone in the field a chance to get past him in polling.

Simply put, Diaz Sr. was too terrible to be left alone.

Polling/Research

In some circles, there was an operating assumption that Diaz Sr.'s conservative views reflected the broader district given how long he'd served there and his long electoral winning streak. However, a poll commissioned by Bronx United in the Spring of 2020

showed this was actually not the case. In fact, Diaz's antics were unpopular and could be used *against* him.

Q16. Turning to Ruben Diaz Sr., which of the following best describes him?

- 71% A career politician**
- 6 A political outsider
- 22 Not sure

- 45% Just another politician**
- 34 A truly special leader
- 20 Not sure

- 36% Says offensive things I disagree with**
- 36 Not afraid to tell the truth
- 28 Not sure

- 34% Puts himself first**
- 40 Puts the Bronx first
- 25 Not sure

- 30% Too extreme in his views**
- 40 A mainstream politician
- 30 Not sure

The same poll also found broad disagreement with his socially conservative views - specifically his comments on a woman's right to choose and the LGBTQ+ community. This disagreement actually led voters to side *against* him if they were presented with this information.

	Vote Against Him	Not Hold Against	Does Not Sure	Does Not Bother	Not Sure
Diaz interrupted a City Council sensitivity training, yelling that he wouldn't "rat" if he saw sexual harassment happening at the council's offices.	61%	2	12	11	14
Diaz promotes his experience running a network of elder care providers claiming its 1000 person staff serves 5000 seniors. Recent records show no one works for the organization, it gets money mostly from Diaz's campaign funds, and hasn't operated since Diaz's campaign chairman was accused of embezzling from it.	61%	2	12	9	15
Diaz opposed a law strengthening a woman's right to choose, saying "New York State became the abortion capital of the United States" and criticized the Hispanic senators who voted for it.	59%	2	10	17	12
In 1994 Diaz denounced Gay Games, which were held in New York, saying that the participants were likely "infected with AIDS," and that the event could lead children "to conclude that if there are so many gay and lesbian athletes then there is nothing wrong, nor any risks involved."	57%	4	13	15	11
Diaz hired a man who has broken federal law by operating illegal radio stations to do publicity for his campaign.	54%	3	11	13	19
In 2003, Diaz opposed the expansion of the Harvey Milk school, a small high school program meant to help gay and lesbian students. Diaz called it segregation and said, "The homosexual kids, they are not the ones with the problems."	53%	3	6	21	17
In a radio interview, Diaz said that other member of the City Council shunned him because the Council was "controlled by the homosexual community."	52%	3	10	19	16
Diaz opposed stem cell research saying "Hitler used the ashes of the Jews to make bars of soap. In America, we are selling fetal tissue to be used in the manufacture of cosmetics. What is the difference?"	51%	6	9	12	22

At the same time, Bronx United had found the race had narrowed as campaigns began actively reaching out to voters within NY-15 - strengthening the theory that a significant portion of his initial strength was based on name ID alone. It also noted that Diaz Sr. had strong opposition, with 34% of voters saying they would not vote for him.

	Vote w/o leans	Vote w/leans	Will Not Vote for
Ruben Diaz Sr.	27	32	34
Ritchie Torres	13	14	12
Michael Blake	8	10	13
Melissa Mark-Viverito	5	7	18
Ydanis Rodriguez	5	7	14
Samelys Lopez	3	4	13
Tomas Ramos	0	1	14
Marlene Cintron	0	1	16
Eric Stevenson	0	0	18
Jonathan Ortiz	0	0	13
Not sure	38	24	

Once voters learned more about Diaz, the polling showed movement away from him. **[Note: this poll got the first seven candidates in the same order as they stand after election night]**

	Vote w/o leans	Vote w/leans	Will Not Vote for
Ritchie Torres	24	24	9
Michael Blake	16	16	9
Ruben Diaz Sr.	12	13	60
Samelys Lopez	9	10	7
Ydanis Rodriguez	7	7	9
Melissa Mark-Viverito	6	8	15
Tomas Ramos	1	1	8
Eric Stevenson	1	1	13
Marlene Cintron	0	1	9
Jonathan Ortiz	0	0	7
Not sure	24	18	

In addition, the poll also found that Diaz Sr.'s support for Donald Trump and Rudy Guliani would be a massive negative in the district, providing Bronx United with a strong issue to heavily lean into with voters.

	Favorable	Neutral	Unfavorable
Barack Obama	96	2	1
Andrew Cuomo	88	9	4
Joe Biden	71	20	7
Nancy Pelosi	71	18	6
Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez	69	16	5
Bernie Sanders	65	23	10
Bill de Blasio	54	27	18
Jose Serrano	48	31	8
Rudy Guilliani	13	13	69
Donald Trump	4	9	84

Tactics, Strategy and Results

Armed with this research, Bronx United began a campaign in the spring of 2020 to embark on a multifaceted campaign. These efforts would:

- Raise awareness in earned media about who Ruben Diaz Sr. is and why he is uniquely terrible while driving his top negative messages.
- Help build an overall movement to invest in Ruben Diaz Sr.'s defeat;
- Create space for a candidate to swing past him;
- Run impactful negative ads to educate voters.

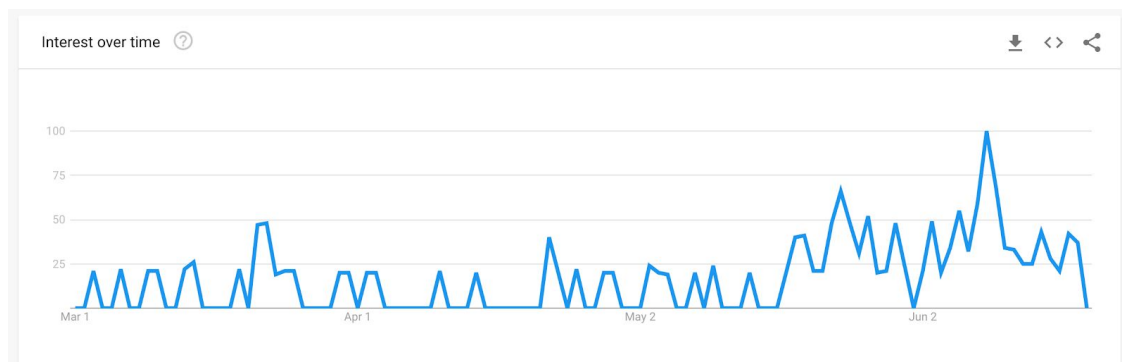
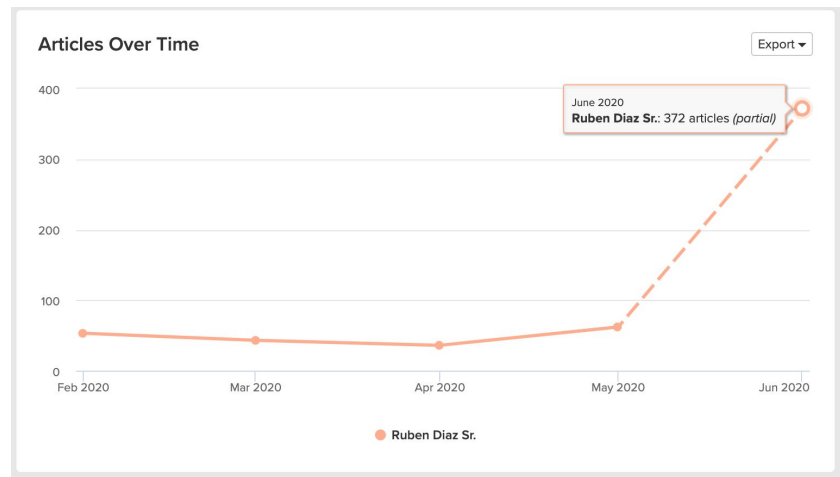
Earned Media

To start, Bronx United began an earned media campaign in early May that 1) raised the alarms about Diaz Sr. potential victory and 2) Drove up his negatives 3) Responded in real-time to Diaz's campaign tactics and antics. A sample of dozens of stories included:

- **Daily News:** Ruben Diaz Sr. accused of improperly using another coronavirus food giveaway for campaigning in tight Bronx congressional primary'
- **Daily News:** Councilman Ruben Diaz Sr. under fire for alleged elections violations in heat of Bronx Congressional run.
- **New York Times:** It's America's Bluest House Seat. How Is This Man a Top Contender?

- [Daily News](#): Bronx Councilman unmasked! NYC's Ruben Diaz Sr. outside without mask; little social distancing
- [Newsweek](#): A Trump-Friendly, Anti-AOC Democrat Is Poised to Win a New York House Seat—With Some Help From the Pandemic
- [Gay City News](#): Ruben Diaz, Sr.'s Long History of Acting the Republican

As a result of Bronx United's effort, Ruben Diaz Sr. media mentions - which were almost all negative - skyrocketed the final two months of the race.



This relentless onslaught of negative press and active social media pushback on his events and antics helped freeze any last-second political support Diaz Sr. may have picked during the home stretch of the race. The effort also exposed his shady tactics. In the end, Diaz Sr. could not hold a single event without Bronx United monitoring it and hammering him for improprieties.

Digital Ads

["Carmen's Story"](#)

Bronx United launched publicly in Feb 2020 by announcing the release of a long-form ad in [English](#) and [Spanish](#) that centered around the story of a longtime LGBTQ+ activist and pastor in the Bronx named Rev. Carmen Hernandez.

["Hat Ad"](#)

After polling data showed the sheer unpopularity of Trump in the district, we released a pre-roll ad on Twitter in early May drawing the comparison between Diaz's notorious cowboy hat and a MAGA hat. Having generated a significant amount of organic reach, several other outside groups went on to incorporate this imagery into their TV and direct mail programs in the final weeks of the campaign.

["Bad for the Bronx"](#)

With a wellspring of negative press coming out about Diaz, our final step was to put an aggressive digital ad spend targeted at NY15 voters - previously identified through our polling - who would be amenable to peeling off from Diaz. Our message testing identified that the three most motivating Diaz criticisms were (1) his support of Trump, (2) his defense of alleged sexual predators, and (3) his anti-LGBTQ+ and anti-choice record.

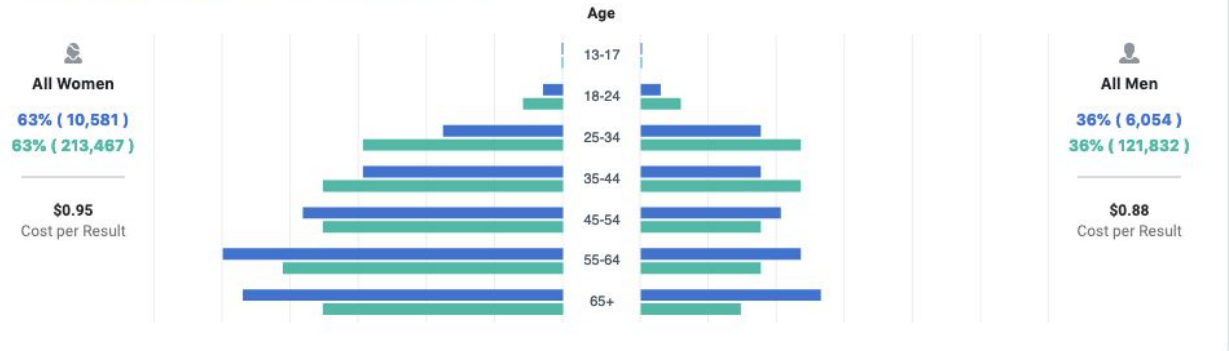
By creating a hyper-targeted, simple yet blunt ad that used his own words and record against him, we effectively flooded the digital landscape in the race. The impact of this ad was further heightened by its narrator John Leguizamo, a well-known actor and NYC native.

(Data for Progress released a poll shortly before this ad was released showing Diaz slightly ahead, but this did not include the weaknesses of targeted opposition messaging.)

The ad results speak for themselves: a universe of roughly 20k prime voters saw this ad 336k times on Facebook and Instagram, and it received nearly 17,000 completed views.

By election day, the entire district and its core voting base had been entirely saturated with our ads. Furthermore, the demographic breakdowns of views and engagements demonstrate its impact in reaching the core voting base that denied Diaz a victory in the June 23 primary.

16,696 Results: ThruPlay ▾ 336,885 Impressions ▾



Video Plays at 25%	Video Plays at 50%	Video Plays at 75%	Video Plays at 95%	Video Plays at 100%	Video Plays
27,474	17,738	7,692	6,099	5,497	284,938