

# COMMUNITY ALERT



May 31, 2011

## **New York State Senator Ruben Diaz, Sr. Goes Back on Promise**

On May 15<sup>th</sup>, New York State Senator Ruben Diaz, Sr. held an anti-gay marriage rally he called "Rally to Protect Marriage." At this rally, Reverend Ariel Torres Ortega of Radio Visión Cristiana, told the crowd that [gay people are "worthy of death" based on their actions.](#) This statement came on the heels of months of violent anti-lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender incidents from October to April, including the brutal anti-gay attacks in the Bronx, the death of Anthony Collao, a straight young person attending a party hosted by his gay friends in Brooklyn, and violence in Staten Island, Chelsea and the West Village.

Upon hearing about this statement, AVP reached out to Senator Diaz's office to demand that he immediately denounce these words and take responsibility for the harm that they can cause. Senator Diaz's Chief of Staff, Brenda Candelaria agreed to issue a statement denouncing Reverend Ortega's statement; however, after nearly two weeks of follow-up by AVP, the Senator's office has still not issued a statement.

Anti-LGBTQ violence is the product of a culture of violence that is created and sustained by statements like the one made by Reverend Ortega. Elected officials and public figures like Senator Diaz must recognize the way that they contribute to this violence through their words and actions and through their support of people such as Reverend Ortega. Anti-LGBTQ violence affects everyone and Senator Diaz and Reverend Ortega must be held accountable for the culture of violence that they create and contribute to.

AVP works to educate and inform all of New Yorkers about the need to stop anti-LGBTQ violence. Before we publically call out a community leader we try to work with them to take responsibility for and denounce any messages that would contribute to violence. In this case, we gave Senator Diaz nearly two weeks to denounce the hate speech expressed at his anti-gay marriage rally and, despite his office's private assertions to AVP that he would, ultimately he has not done so.

As Pride Month kicks off, our communities cannot wait for Senator Diaz to make our safety a priority. All elected officials have a responsibility to encourage safety and to end this culture of violence. Ruben Diaz Sr. has failed to do so.

AVP denounces Reverend Ortega's dangerous and violent statement and calls on Senator Diaz, Sr. to publically do the same.