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Helping Immigrants With Their Legal Troubles

By Giselle Chollett

In his 16 years as a lawyer and an activist, Nestor Diaz has advised and helped different people and immigrant groups that required his services in Corona, Jackson Heights, Elmhurst and areas around Queens.

Born in 1963, Diaz and his family moved to Queens in 1974. He studied at Blessed Sacrament located in Jackson Heights and then went on to John Jay College of Criminal Justice, where he pursued a bachelor's degree in Government and Public Administration. Diaz then attended St. John's University Law School in Jamaica.

Diaz began his public service career with the Bureau of Consumer Frauds and Protection in the New York State Attorney General's office and in the 80's was selected by his parish community as a representative of their interests in the Parish Life Committee at Blessed Sacrament Church, in Jackson Heights.

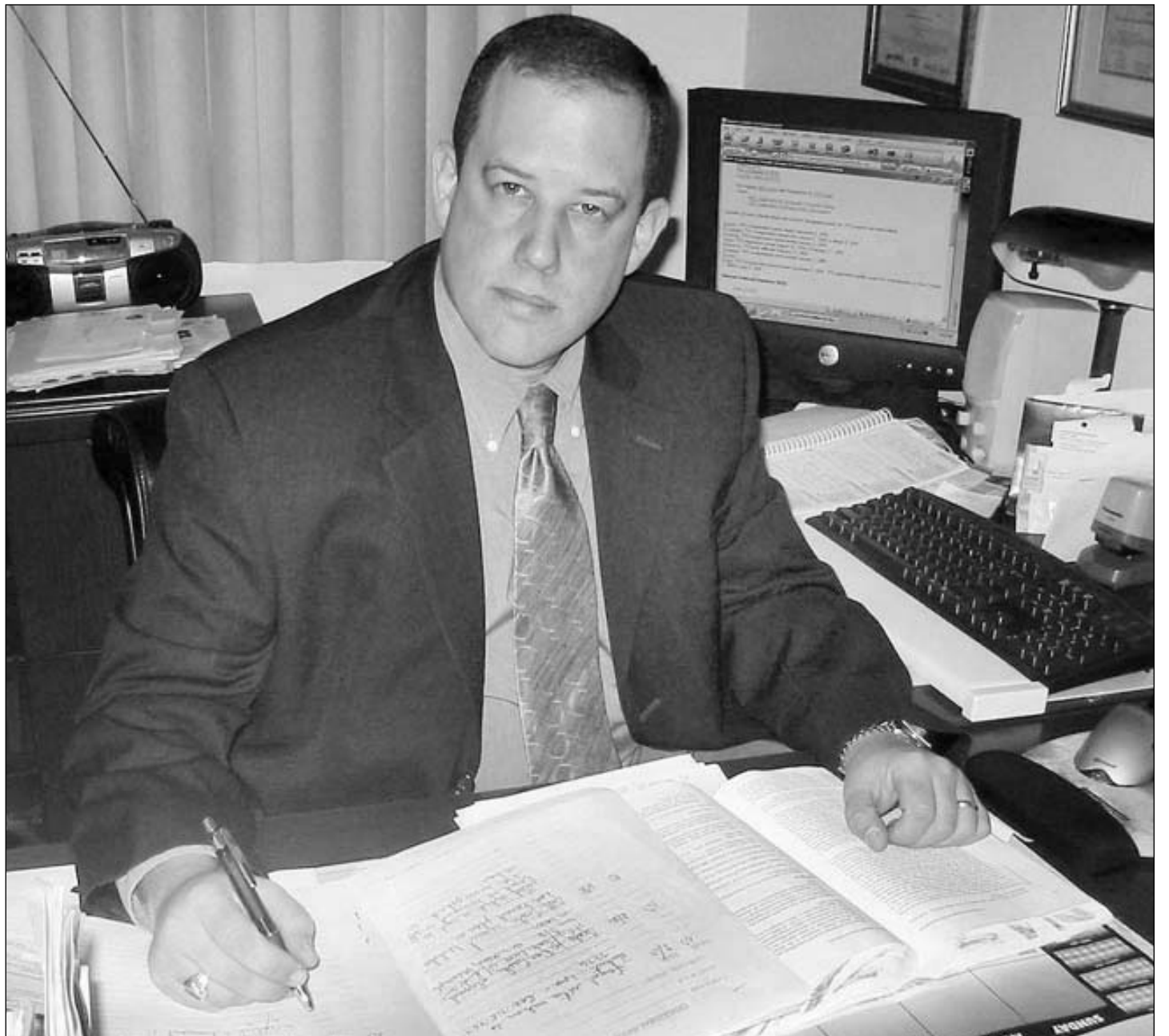
Of Dominican descent, Diaz continued his service in the public area working at the City of New York's Human Resources Administration and in the Administration for Children's Services.

He is currently running his own legal office and working part time in the Councilmember Hiram Monserrate's office. There he is responsible for managing a free legal clinic.

Diaz has earned renown for his persistence in the domestic violence arena, a very important problem that affects people in all walks of life.

He suggests that people, regardless their immigration status – legal or not – report their situation to the police, because they have the duty of protecting them.

"Today there are laws that protect them and make documentation procedures easier and problem-free," he said, adding that whether someone is illegal or a legal resident and is a victim of domestic violence from his/her



THE QUEENS COURIER/ Photo by John Caballero

Nestor Diaz: A lawyer and an activist for his community.

partner which is, at the same time, the same person that is asking for his/her legalization documents, the victim can demonstrate the situation and receive legal help, even if they don't have the required time needed to get their legal documents.

Facing this issue every day, where people are threatened by their spouses and many other problems in the Hispanic community like language, immigrant

status, education, and others, Diaz said that one thing that we need is more representation in the courtroom.

He explained that in Queens where the Hispanic population is between 25 and 30%, there are just two elected judges. Taking that into account, Diaz said that his goal is to become a judge and in that way do things with more positive impact in the community."

Diaz said that he's expecting to

run for a judicial position in the near future. "You need 10 years of experience to ascend to this position and I already have 16 years. I am qualified for it," he concluded.

Because of his community work, Diaz has received recognition from elected officials and private and public organizations. He was also cited by the New York Police Department for selfless heroism in the hours following the attack on the World Trade Center.



On becoming a judge: You need 10 years of experience to ascend to this position and I already have 16 years. I am qualified for it."

Nestor Diaz