

Why Is NYC Mayor de Blasio Punishing the Poor?

By Bill Donohue

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When the Marxist Sandinistas ousted the Somoza family in Nicaragua in 1979, they dressed in Castro-like fatigues to show their solidarity with the poor. They wound up crushing them, while conveniently living in the same mansions as the Somozas.

Helping to raise money for the Communists, and working alongside them in Nicaragua, was a young man whose birth name was Warren Wilhelm, Jr. He would later change his name twice, settling on Bill de Blasio.

This is the same man who lied to his own children about where he went on his honeymoon: he went, illegally, to Cuba, to show his solidarity with the Communists. Now the New York City mayor has repaired to his roots, rhetorically championing the poor, while punishing them with his public policies.

The poor are striking back. On March 4, busloads of inner-city African Americans and Latinos showed up in Albany to protest the mayor's decision to kill three charter schools that had been approved by the Bloomberg administration.

There were actually two rallies in Albany: the one led by de Blasio, and the one led by Eva Moskowitz, a former New York City councilwoman who runs Success Academy Charter Schools. He drew 1,000 supporters, mostly union teachers; she drew 11,000, mostly non-union teachers, parents, and students. No one of any significance spoke at the mayor's rally, but Governor Andrew Cuomo spoke at the charter-school rally.

Moskowitz won the backing of de Blasio's predecessor, Michael Bloomberg, and it is no secret that the Marxist Mayor hates them both. But aside from the teachers' unions, which are perpetually frightened of competition, few New York notables are on the mayor's side.

In addition to Cuomo and Bloomberg, de Blasio has incurred the wrath of former New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani, and the editorial boards of *The New York Times*, *New York Post*, and the *Daily News*. Attacking de Blasio from the left are two of the most wild-eyed elected officials in the nation, City Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito, and Public Advocate Letitia James: They want to destroy all the charter schools.

"There's little question that New York has one of the nation's most successful charter school systems," is how the *Times* put it. The *Post* posed the right question: "Why are these charters under attack? Mostly because they show poor and minority children can learn if given a good school."

The *Daily News*, which is the paper of choice for most blacks and Latinos, said, "The charter school sector has been a high-wattage bright spot in New York City public education of late. The de Blasio administration's crusade against it is an ignorant insult to a decade-and-a-half of progress on behalf of children."

The facts are indisputable: 93 percent of charter school children in the city are black or Latino. Moskowitz explains why New Yorkers support charter schools by a margin of 56-34 percent (much higher among minorities): "We're in the top 1 percent in that state of New York in math and we're in the top 7 percent in reading and writing. And that is all schools. And our students in Harlem, in the South Bronx, in Bed-Stuy are significantly less socio-economically advantaged."

There are 50,000 kids on a waiting list for charter schools, all a direct result of the abysmal failure of traditional

public schools in poor areas. These are the schools the mayor is attacking. So which schools does he want to keep open? According to the *Times*, when he was campaigning for mayor, de Blasio said “he would end the practice of closing low-performing public schools.” To top things off, charter schools cost \$5,549 less a year per student than district public schools.

Why is de Blasio punishing the poor? There are three reasons, two of which are easy to pinpoint: He is a petty man bent on paying back Bloomberg and Moskowitz, and he is totally committed to the unions.

To understand what is really driving him, however, we need to consider why he supported the Sandinistas and Castro. Control. It’s all about control.

De Blasio is not a liberal: He is a hard-core left-wing ideologue. Charter schools represent independence, and that is not something that those who lust for power can tolerate, much less the notion of an independent public school. He is not interested in helping the poor – he is interested in owning them. He sees himself as the Grand Custodian of the dispossessed, but in reality he is acting more like their Master.

Those outside of New York who are looking to de Blasio as a model of “progressive” success better keep their eyes open. He is shaping up to be the biggest disaster New York City has ever experienced.

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