

## Piling On De Blasio In The Democratic Mayoral Debate

by Chester Soria

Thursday, August 22, 2013 03:11 PM

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NEW YORK — Tag team. That was the phrase that seems to have endured since last night's first official Democratic primary debate, where Public Advocate Bill de Blasio was the main target of fiery attacks by his rivals.

The tallest guy on the stage by far weathered attacks on his record as a legislator, his fight to keep struggling hospitals open and his television ad in which his son Dante de Blasio claims his dad was the only candidate who would end the New York Police Department's current use of stop-and-frisk.

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On that last subject, the attacks came from the unlikely duo of City Council Speaker Christine Quinn and former Comptroller Bill Thompson during a cross-examination in the debate when candidates were allowed to ask each other questions.

"Stop lying to the people of New York City," Thompson, the only black candidate in the race, said to de Blasio and repeated a demand that he retract the aforementioned ad.

After de Blasio tried to respond by saying he stood by the claims in his advertisement because he has said he would not bring back NYPD Police Commissioner Ray Kelly under his administration and backed two bills aimed at reining in part at reining in stop-and-frisk.

When it was Quinn's turn to ask a question, but she gave the floor back over to Thompson, saying, "I want to know if you're satisfied with the answer you just got."

Smiling slightly, Thompson replied in a stentorian voice: "No, I'm not." He said to De Blasio, "I definitely don't need lectures from you on this issue, and I don't need legislation."

Thompson then accused de Blasio's of a "pattern" of dishonesty, accusing De Blasio of flip-flopping on term limits and playing loose with discretionary items. "Will the real Bill de Blasio please stand up?" Thompson asked.

De Blasio tried to fend off the line of attack. "In professional wrestling they allow tag teams," de Blasio said jokingly before arguing that as a councilman he helped lead action against the Mayor Michael Bloomberg's third term.

"I'm very proud to have stood up to the mayor when Speaker Quinn gave him a back room deal to allow him a third term he should not have had," de Blasio said.

He didn't respond to his position on member items, but the subject came up again when former Congressman Anthony Weiner tried to attack both de Blasio and Quinn with a question that

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backfired on the one-time frontrunner who now polls at a distant fourth.

Weiner asked Quinn about her 2008 so-called "slush fund" scandal, in which she was accused of unethically managing the Council's discretionary money. Weiner invoked an alleged report on the federal investigation into the scandal, reigniting a question originally posed to Quinn by Thompson in early August.

But instead of focusing the attack on Quinn, Weiner tried to lump de Blasio into the scandal.

"During the period of time that a lot of this was going on, Bill de Blasio was the assistant majority leader and a member of your budget negotiating team," Weiner said. "Can you assure us that in that report Mr. de Blasio is not implicated in any way, that there's no mention of him?"

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Quinn turned heads when she suddenly came to de Blasio's defense.

"Casting aspersions on the public advocate like that is just outrageous," Quinn said. "I don't have any idea what he's talking about, and I think it's really unfortunate."

While much of the spotlight was taken up between de Blasio, Quinn and Thompson, the four other men in the race — Weiner included — tried their hardest to remind the audience of their presence on the stage.

Comptroller John Liu, whose bid for mayor has yet to recover from the Campaign Finance Board's rejection of matching funds after his fundraising scandal, lobbed attacks at the three headliners.

Liu saved his harshest words for Thompson, who he succeeded as comptroller in 2010. He questioned Thompson's record on the CityTime scandal, and even relied on Occupy Wall Street rhetoric when he referred to Thompson as a "one-percenter."

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Liu also mocked the back-and-forth between de Blasio and Quinn and said that both of them failed to lead on hospital closures.

Former Brooklyn Councilman Sal Albanese repeated his mantra of bringing "common sense" back to City Hall, and decried the politicization of policing. But on more than one occasion, Albanese had to remind moderators that he and some of the other candidates were barely speaking.

"Do I get to talk?" he asked.

"Do I get to talk, too?" asked conservative Democratic candidate Erick Salgado.

Salgado, the only Latino in the Democratic primary, tried to get in on the de Blasio bashing bandwagon by asking why de Blasio co-opted the idea of municipal IDs for immigrants that Salgado promoted earlier in the race. Otherwise, the minister got some laughs out of the crowd when asked if he'd move into Gracie Mansion.

"Me, my wife and our six kids," he said.

The only other candidate to get as many laughs was Weiner. He got applause for promoting his policy suggestion of bringing single-payer healthcare to New York, and had suffered from some unfortunate phrasing when he referred to service industry work as jobs "poor people jobs" — even though he immediately said he supported the fast food workers' efforts to organize.

Still, the crowd seemed to pay the most attention to an unintentional innuendo that brought attention back to the sexting scandals that have undermined Weiner's candidacy.

"This notion that the city is even ready for a stiff wind right now is overstated," Weiner answered

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during a question on the city's preparedness for emergency situations only to get laughs from the audience.

A question on whether the candidates had ever texted was probably fated to get the response it received when the mic turned to Weiner: even louder laughing and whooping from the audience when he answered simply:

"Yes."

[Animated image from Daily Intelligencer](#)