

Meeting of the Community Relations Board

June 19, 2013

I. Welcome

Mr. Reinaldo Valdez: Good afternoon. Thank you for coming and participating in our meeting. Dr. Richardson will not be able to be with us. I will chair the meeting on his behalf. We will have a moment of silence at this time. Please remember my daughter who passed away recently.

II. Approval of Agenda

It was moved by Mr. Wilfredo Ruiz that today's agenda be approved. This motion was seconded by Mr. Edward Shohat, and upon being put to a vote, passed by a unanimous vote of those members present.

III. Presentation by Lucia Davis Raiford, Director, Miami-Dade County Community Action and Human Services Department

Mr. Valdez: We have the privilege of having with us Ms. Lucia Davis Raiford, Director, Miami-Dade Community Action and Human Services Department. I have already had the pleasure of listening to her presentation on a prior occasion, and I know that she is a very capable individual representing the County in this important position. Thank you, Ms. Davis, for being with us.

Ms. Lucia Davis: It is my pleasure to be with you. Thank you for inviting me and giving me the opportunity to tell you what we do. The Community Action and Human Services Department is the consolidated department of the former Community Action Agency and the former Human Services Department. It brings together all essential human services under one department. We work with poor people, age 60 and above. Our elderly services program serves about 240 meals to seniors at 22 meal sites. We have five adult day centers that are open from 8 am to 5 pm, and offer exercise, recreational activities, field trips, health, nutritional counseling, and medication management. We have nurses at these sites, and we do everything to keep the seniors engaged. We also provide assistance to the caregivers: we offer nutritional and emotional counseling. We also provide at-home care to seniors who are frail and home-bound. These programs are designed to encourage the continued independence of seniors. We try to avoid having people in nursing homes or assisted-living facilities. I am proud of the at-home programs. A lot of our programs do not have income requirements, but rather age requirements. In our at-home care program, a certified Nursing Assistant provides personal care in a client's home. In addition, we also have a CHORE program in which

the staff does the heavy work. We also provide medication management. The fastest rising age-group in this country is comprised of people who are 80 and above.

The County has provided a great amount of funding to support our elderly services unit. Residents access elderly services through our Care Planning Unit. This unit is comprised of social workers who evaluate the needs of the seniors through interviews. They can refer the seniors to federal programs. Most of our seniors are Medicaid recipients, which makes them eligible for a range of services beyond what the County provides. The County charges nothing for its services. We have a huge volunteer program with more than 1000 volunteers, including volunteers who are seniors. We also have the foster grand-parents program. In order to qualify as a volunteer, you have to be 55 or above, and not be frail, in order to help those who are more frail. Retired professionals provide their services free of charge.

We also have a program for veterans. We have a contract with the United States Veterans Administration to expedite the claims of veterans in Miami-Dade. There is a great deal of unclaimed money for veterans. We were able to claim almost one million dollars for veterans last year. We hope to grow this program and expend it to all of our 16 neighborhood service centers.

We have services for the disabled, a job training program, programs for domestic violence survivors, survivors of sexual trafficking, programs to make homes more energy efficient. These programs have a lot of impact on lives. We have a weatherization program. We also offer cash payments to help seniors pay their energy bills. We offer rental assistance. We have free eviction support services. We hope to get better at predicting services, in order to become more pro-active. We have waiting lists for all of our services

One of our greatest treasures is the Greater-Miami Service Core for young people from 18 to 24 who might be considered to be at-risk. In our Neighborhood Centers we want to develop public/private partnerships because we have a lot of unoccupied space. We want to attract CBOs to come and provide services in our Neighborhood Centers. We have a "Services in Motion" bus to bring services to the communities. We also have the Head Start program, in which we work with moms and families who are expecting children, and children from zero to kindergarten. It gives children a solid preparation, because education is the great equalizer. There is a citizens' involvement and participation program to develop and engage communities to participate in government. We provide emergency assistance, one-time financial assistance for rent. We have substance-abuse programs. We have a farm-worker program. Our challenge is to make sure that we deliver services in a culturally-appropriate way.

Mr. Valdez: Thank you. We will take questions from the audience.

Rabbi Schiff: I enjoyed the presentation. I serve as the Vice Chair of Dade-County Homeless Trust. Do you work with the Homeless Trust, in terms of providing assistance to the homeless?

Ms. Davis: Unfortunately we do. Homelessness occurs when there is a crisis; there are a number of working poor, who can sometimes end up being homeless. We are trying to have a better bridge between our work and the Homeless Trust. There is a big gap between the need to have a home, and meeting the criteria that would make you qualify for our programs. What we do is to work on homelessness caused by different things, such as crimes, domestic violence, and the economy.

Rabbi Schiff: Who is eligible for your services?

Ms. Davis: For some of the federal programs there is an income eligibility guideline. We can only take people who qualify for what our funder requires. If you do not qualify, we try to connect you with other service providers.

Mr. Valdez: You can connect people with service providers who can provide direct assistance. This is what happens at the Salvation Army which receives \$17 dollar per AIDS patient, but it costs \$42 per bed; so it has to partner with other organizations.

Mr. Ed Harris: You did not mention youth and mental health.

Ms. Davis: We do provide some mental health support services in our rehabilitative services program. We do provide a psychological services internship program, in which PhD candidates provide services directly, but we have a huge gap in this area. We have developed partnerships with providers in the community for these types of services. It is true that we have a huge gap for youth, from 6 to 17 years old, because we have lost our funding for these programs. We are looking at new ways to bring services to youth; substantive programs to support young people and their parents.

Mr. Harris: It seems that there is a gap when you look holistically at the services you provide.

Ms. Davis: We are active, but not as adequate as we need to be because we do not have the resources for this. We recognize it is a gap; however, we are looking for partners who will provide us the funding.

Ms. York: We also give \$1500 scholarship for high school graduates in 16 target areas.

Ms. Renita Holmes: Thank you for your presentation. I am big on victim services, because they are vitally important. At the Liberty City CAA we provide victim services. I am hoping that CAA will be able to provide these services in the south of the County. My interest is with citizens' involvement, and community education. Can we enhance

this? I would like to see more citizens get involved. How can we get more businesses involved in housing or civil issues?

Ms. Davis: This should be the subject of a separate meeting solely devoted to this issue. I agree that we need to do more with regard to citizens' participation. The Community Action and Human Services Department has the best structure for getting a great deal of information and programs out into the community. You are invited to join us as we look at what and for whom we provide services.

Mr. Edward Shohat: Thank you for being here. You seem to have an enormous amount of work on your plate. How are you funded, and what is your annual budget?

Ms. Davis: We report to the Mayor. We lost a significant contract with the Early Learning Coalition, which paid us to do the administrative part of the School Readiness program. Our funds are from the tax payers and from grants; we have a grant from the Alliance for Aging for our elderly programs; the Florida Coalition against Domestic Violence for our Domestic Violence and Human Trafficking program; the Early Learning Coalition for the School Readiness program.

Mr. Shohat: We have a recurring situation in our community with missing and exploited children. Are you connected with the Department of Children and Families (DCF)?

Ms. Davis: We have some connectivity with DCF relative to its responsibility to regulate day care and early learning facilities. We have 80 plus such facilities in our Head Start program, and DCF staff comes in for inspections. However, programmatically, I am not ready to partner with DCF, because it is drowning in administrative responsibilities. We are not administratively mature enough for such a partnership, although there is a need for it. We are incrementally looking at what to do to improve the foster care placement of children.

Mr. Valdez: The Office of State Attorney is working on the issues of missing and exploited children, as well as Human Trafficking. These are issues that the CRB should address more directly.

Mr. Ronald Fulton: I want to talk about the services provided to people with disabilities.

Ms. Davis: We provide a number of services to people with disabilities. We have a day-center program for people with disabilities, with training support, emotional support, recreational activities, and field trips. We are an introspective organization. We are looking at best-practices across the country, and even across the globe. There are some wonderful programs for people with disabilities in Israel. We do not want to warehouse people.

Ms. Smith-Jackson: Are there any restrictions to the rental assistance program? Are there restrictions for people who have been incarcerated?

Ms. Davis: There are no restrictions for people who have been incarcerated, but there are guidelines. The Housing Assistance Grant (HAG) program allows you to stay in a place and they pay 6 months. We can hold workshops to better inform the community about what we do.

Mr. Herman Martinez: Do people have to have a Social Security number to qualify for the services?

Ms. Davis: Not necessarily. That's for federal programs not for County programs.

Ms. Smith-Jackson: A number of people say that they are not eligible for housing because they do not pass background checks.

Ms. Davis: I also head the Office of Human Rights and Fair Employment Practices. In the cases to which Ms. Smith-Jackson is referring, it may be necessary to do some housing discrimination research. It may also be necessary to look at source of income discrimination, which is illegal. It may be useful to research what a private housing provider or homeowners association is allowed to use to bar people from housing. In terms of eligibility for public housing programs, a person's contact with the Criminal Justice system only comes into play if he/she has been a victim of a crime. In that case, the person is entitled to all sorts of assistance, particularly if he/she is a victim of domestic violence, sexual assault or human trafficking.

Mr. Shohat: I believe that this is an issue for Legal Services of Greater Miami. There are also private practitioners who specialize in housing discrimination cases.

Ms. Tanaka Charles: I am the founder of "A Mother's Hurting Heart". I lost my son three years ago, and I created a program for youth in his memory. We are looking for space, and we are asking for some assistance. We are specifically targeting the siblings of slain youth, to stop them from seeking revenge for the death of their brother/sister. We want to offer them training and scholarships. I know that a number of programs have been shut down, and we are willing to provide services to the youth to stop crime.

Ms. Davis: As I mentioned earlier, we are trying to establish public/private partnerships to deliver services in our buildings. We want to identify emerging organizations for the County to partner with. There are some organizations that are able to provide the services better than a government department could. We can partner with these organizations, and serve as a fiscal agent for them to help them secure funding. The end result would be for us to bring services to the neighborhoods.

Ms. Davis: Human trafficking is an unmentioned slavery that is extremely widespread in the world. It is very active in the United States and particularly in Miami. Modern-day slavers traffic in women and children. Young women are routinely being arrested for prostitution and sex work, but when you investigate, it is clear that they are victims of crimes and exploited. We are working with the County's Juvenile Services Department to decriminalize the victims of sexual trafficking, and we provide safe havens in our shelters for the victims. We are working with the Women's Fund, the State Attorney's Office, and the CBOs. Miami-Dade County Government was the leader in the United States in this work.

Mr. Valdez: This sounds like something that our Criminal Justice and Law Enforcement Committee could take on.

Ms. Amy Carswell: There are several ways we could work together. We have people who come to us for guidance and we could steer them to your department. Other times people come with problems, and I would be happy to send them to you. The Community Advisory Groups face these kinds of issues, and they could join forces with the CRB.

Mr. Shohat: There are some community-wide organizations that can help Ms. Davis get her message out there.

Mr. Valdez: There are a number of things we can do, if we are willing to become involved.

Mr. Shohat: Do you put out a weekly or monthly report?

Ms. Davis: We regularly produce informational materials. I would like to have a quarterly report. Our respective staff members need to sit down together and come up with a plan.

Dr. Capp: I would like to thank Ms. Davis and her staff for this presentation. As the budgetary process moves forward we need to support this department, because a lot of the tension in the community results from people who do not have access to these services. For the last decade the County has retreated from social services, because of the economic environment. Some people on the County Commission support social services, and we need to support them as they support this department in the budgetary process.

Mr. Fulton: What do you think of the ten-year consolidated plan?

Ms. Davis: We participate in the development of the consolidated plan, but I cannot project how much funding we will be receiving 5 or 10 years from now, because it depends on the amount of revenue generated through taxes. Programs for poor people

get hurt if they are seen as ancillary to the state of the economy; however, if they are seen as helping the economy, they can attract more funding. Empowering poor people in Miami-Dade economically is essential to the economic recovery of the County. Our programs are designed to provide a crisis response to crises that were created by the system, such as racism, sexism, classism, etc. Therefore, I want to make sure that as we do this work we tackle the systemic flaws.

Mr. Valdez: We are grateful for your service to the County, the state and the nation.

IV. Nominating Committee Report/CRB Officer and Executive Committee Elections

Mr. Valdez: Ms. Jackson, can you give us an update on the Nominating Committee?

Nominating Committee Report

II. Actions

Item #1

Ms. Smith-Jackson: The following County Commission appointees are recommended for re-appointment to a term ending May 2015: Rev. Eddie Gervais, Dr. Helen McGuire, Mr. Brian Siegal, and Ms. Lovette McGill. We need to accomplish this today.

It was moved by Mr. Wilfredo Ruiz that the County Commission appointees named above be re-appointed to a term ending in May 2015. This motion was seconded by Rabbi Schiff.

Mr. Adam Tavakoly: As the Chair of the Asian Advisory Board, if I want to continue serving on the CRB after my term ends, what can I do?

Mr. Valdez: You are a member of the CRB as long as you are the Chair of the Asian Advisory Board, until a person is appointed to replace you. However, if your term expires, then you can have a commissioner nominate you, or if there is a spot available, you will have to apply to become an at-large member.

Ms. Smith-Jackson: As none were opposed to the re-appointment of the Commission appointees named above, the motion is adopted unanimously by those CRB members present.

Item #2

Ms. Smith-Jackson: The CRB shall forward a letter to the respective County Commissioner requesting that the candidate be re-appointed. No action is required today.

Mr. Ruiz: Item #2 relates to Item #5 – Commission vacancies

Mr. Shohat: No, Item #2 relates to Item #1. The candidates whom we voted to re-appoint should receive their re-appointment letters.

Item #3

Ms. Smith-Jackson: The following CRB appointees are recommended for re-appointment by the CRB to a term ending May 2015: Ms. Maritza Lopez, and Mr. George Yap.

It was moved by Mr. Edward Shohat that the CRB appointees named above be re-appointed to a term ending in May 2015. This motion was seconded by Dr. Larry Capp, and upon being put to a vote, passed by a unanimous vote of those CRB members present.

Item #4

Ms. Smith-Jackson: Dr. Faisal Kaleem will be vacating his position. He was appointed by Commissioner Zapata in October 2012, but does not wish to be re-appointed as he is moving out of town. No action is required.

Item #5

Ms. Smith Jackson: Commissioners Bell, Diaz, and Zapata have vacancies. The CRB will recruit and recommend candidates to the appointing commissioners.

Dr. Capp: Do the appointees have to live in their districts?

Mr. Valdez: Usually the commissioners prefer to recommend people from their districts to serve on the CRB. However, if they do not take action, we recommend someone.

Ms. Smith Jackson: A couple of the commissioners have had vacancies for a couple of years.

For the last Action Item, regarding the available positions for the Executive Committee, we decided to not narrow the slate, but rather to let the CRB members vote.

Mr. Tavakoly: I was nominated to be on this list, but my name is not there.

Mr. Valdez: Dr. Capp will facilitate the election for us. New nominations can be made from the floor.

Ms. Amy Carswell: It was decided at the Executive Committee meeting that the Nominating Committee forward the names to the CRB members. Dr. Capp will facilitate the election, but additional names can be submitted from the floor.

Dr. Capp: Dr. Richardson asked me to facilitate the election process, because I am not a candidate for any position. Ballots have been prepared. CRB members were previously contacted and were asked to submit nominations through the Nominating Committee by e-mail. We will go through each office, and we will accept additional nominations from the floor for each office.

Mr. Ahmed Kabani: We discussed the position of Chair and Vice Chair in the Nominating Committee meetings. The practice has been that each CRB Chair has allowed another member to serve as Chair after two years. That does not mean that the Chair does not have the right to run a second time, and we feel that the present Chair has done an excellent job. Since the CRB deals with diversity and the Hispanic community is getting very strong, we believe that the leadership needs to be reviewed.

Dr. Capp: The process that we are planning to undergo is the following. We have an office to be filled; the Nominating Committee has made its nominations; the candidates have accepted the nominations; and it is legally appropriate for these candidates to be on the ballot. I will open the floor for additional candidates for each office, and the CRB members will vote. Any discussion will have to take place once the voting is concluded.

1. Chair

Dr. Capp: With respect to the Chairmanship the nominations are for Dr. Walter Richardson and Mr. Reinaldo Valdez. Are there any other nominations for this office?

It was moved by Mr. Wilfredo Ruiz that the nominations for the Office of CRB Chair be closed. This motion was seconded by Mr. Ahmed Kabani, and upon being put to a vote, passed by a unanimous vote of those CRB members present.

Dr. Capp: Dr. Richardson received 8 votes, and Mr. Valdez received 6 votes. So Dr. Richardson has been re-elected.

2. Vice Chair

Dr. Capp: With respect to the Vice Chairmanship the nominations are for Ms. Vickie Smith-Jackson, Mr. Ahmed Kabani, Ms. Lovette McGill, Mr. Edward Shohat, and Mr. Reinaldo Valdes. Are there any other nominations for this office?

It was moved by Mr. Wilfredo Ruiz that the nominations for the Office of CRB Vice Chair be closed. This motion was seconded by Mr. Adam Tavakoly, and upon being put to a vote, passed by a unanimous vote of those CRB members present.

Dr. Capp: Since there are so many candidates for this position, it may be necessary to have a run-off, to make sure that whoever wins has a majority of the votes.

Mr. Reinaldo Valdez remains the Vice Chair of the CRB.

3. Secretary

Dr. Capp: With respect to the position of Secretary the nomination is for Mr. Wilfredo Ruiz. Are there any other nominations for this office?

It was moved by Mr. Edward Shohat that the nominations for the Office of CRB Secretary be closed. This motion was seconded by Mr. Ahmed Kabani, and upon being put to a vote, passed by a unanimous vote of those CRB members present.

Mr. Wilfredo Ruiz is hereby elected as Secretary of the CRB.

4. Executive Committee

Dr. Capp: There are four positions for at-large membership of the Executive Committee. Mr. Ruiz has withdrawn his name for this position. Are there any other nominations for this office?

Mr. Adam Tavakoly: I believe I was nominated, but my name is not on the list.

It was moved by Mr. Wilfredo Ruiz that Mr. Adam Tavakoly be added to the list of candidates for at-large membership of the Executive Committee. This motion was seconded by Ms. Vickie Smith-Jackson, and upon being put to a vote, passed by a unanimous vote of those CRB members present.

Mr. Brian Siegal: I would like to nominate Mr. Edward Shohat for the position of at-large member of the Executive Committee.

Dr. Capp: Mr. Shohat do you accept this nomination?

Mr. Shohat: Yes, I do.

Dr. Capp: Are there any other nominations for this office?

It was moved by Mr. Wilfredo Ruiz that the nominations for at-large membership of the Executive Committee be closed. This motion was seconded by Dr. Helen McGuire, and upon being put to a vote, passed by a unanimous vote of those CRB members present.

It was moved by Mr. Wilfredo Ruiz that the four candidates who receive the most votes be elected for at-large membership of the Executive Committee. This motion was seconded by Ms. Vickie Smith-Jackson, and upon being put to a vote, passed by a unanimous vote of those CRB members present.

Ms. Renita Holmes: I would like to share with the CRB members that Mr. Willy Davis (phonetic spelling), also known as King the Tailor recently passed away. He was a

police officer, and an entrepreneur in Liberty City. Services will be held at New Way Praise Church on 168th Street and 22nd Ave., at 1 pm. I am requesting to be allowed to make a formal presentation before the CRB.

It was moved by Mr. Adam Tavakoly that Ms. Holmes be allowed to make a presentation before the CRB at its next meeting. This motion was seconded by Dr. Larry Capp, and upon being put to a vote, passed by a unanimous vote of those CRB members present.

Dr. Capp: The following individuals have been elected as at-large members of the Executive Committee – Mr. Ronald Fulton, Ms. Vickie Smith-Jackson, Dr. Helen McGuire and Mr. Edward Shohat.

V. Chair's Report

Mr. Valdez resumed the Chair: I will go through the Chair's report rapidly. Dr. Richardson was unable to be here today, as he is attending a National Baptist Convention. I am pleased to announce that Ms. McGill was honored by the School Board. I wanted to share with you some information from the CRB Executive Committee meeting last week, but as we do not have much time, I will distribute the information, instead. The CRB is currently monitoring a number of issues in the community: the family of a 14-year old African American youth is claiming that the police used excessive force during his arrest; the CRB has received complaints about divisive statements made by an elected official regarding a North Miami Mayoral race; there have been complaints that the Miami Herald is exaggerating the divisions between the Haitian Community and the whites. The CRB Chair is reaching out to the North Miami CRB and the new Mayor to offer assistance. Local activists have proposed an expansion of the Miami-Dade Human Rights Ordinance to provide protections for transgender people. Rabbi Solomon Schiff, who had an operation last week, was recently recognized by the CRB at the Golden Anniversary luncheon. We will deliver an award to him for being a trail blazer in the struggle for civil rights and community relations.

VI. Rabbi Schiff's Statement

Rabbi Schiff: He read the attached statement.

VII. Criminal Justice and Law Enforcement Committee

Mr. Valdez: Ms. Smith-Jackson do you want to make a report?

Ms. Smith-Jackson: We had a busy week last week; please feel free to read our report, particularly Item 4 in which we discuss the actions that have to be taken. In addition, we met with the State Attorney to see what we could do to improve relations in the

community before shootings, and to better handle the cases after shootings; we will be focusing on public education, processes, and accountability. When we are further along in the process we will share more in-depth information.

Ms. Amy Carswell: Do you want to talk about the Community Forum?

Ms. Smith-Jackson: We are thinking of organizing a Community Forum with all pertinent parties to get the message out and hear from the community about their concerns relating to criminal justice. We are in the planning stages.

Mr. Valdez: Thank you. This is a very important committee. When our committees meet, both Criminal Justice and Fair Immigration, please make an effort to attend.

Dr. Capp: The Criminal Justice Committee has done great work particularly with regard to the Trayvon Martin case. We are in the beginning phase of the Zimmerman trial, and we don't know if the trial will be over by the time we meet in July. For our next meeting, it would be best to meet in the Commission Chambers, because of the Trayvon Martin case. This would give us the opportunity to get our message out to the public.

Rabbi Schiff: In 1980, in the McDuffy case, and when the people shot a motorcyclist, the community did not see the trials, so every night after the trial, we had a lawyer explain what had occurred that day. It would be advisable to do something similar in this case.

Ms. Smith-Jackson: Mr. Shohat is working on that. Last week in our meeting, representatives of Channel 6 and WLRN were present and we gave statements.

Rev. Eddie Gervais: The Miami-Dade Police Department and the Judiciary have given us a window after the verdict has been rendered; there will be two hours before it is released so that we can prepare the community regardless of the verdict.

Dr. Capp: The Justice Department is meeting on a regular basis with the Police Department and the State Attorney: they are monitoring this on a daily basis.

Rev. Gervais: Law enforcement and pastors have been allocated four seats in the courtroom; so we will ensure that a member of the Clergy will be in the courtroom every day, and I will be the liaison here. If anything happens, I will be informed immediately.

Mr. Herman Martinez: In the Criminal Justice Action Plan, if we are going to work with the community to accept the methods of the police, we also have to educate the police to be more respectful of the community. We need to educate the police to be more responsible; we do not have to accept the police's action.

Ms. Smith-Jackson: What Mr. Martinez is referring to is our message to the Youth Commission. When we met with the State Attorney, we agreed that the Committee

would meet with the Police Chiefs and the State Attorneys and would address that issue. The Community Forum will address that issue, but we are in the planning phase.

Mr. Valdez: We have to educate the community that when there is a murder, the family members cannot trespass the crime scene, or tamper with a murder scene.

Dr. Helen McGuire: I heard that the gentleman would not be charged; however, he was beaten.

Ms. Renita Holmes: This family has been the victim of two police shootings, and five murders. Once the Jury has been selected, there will be a car pool to the site of the Trayvon Martin trial.

Dr. Capp: I will defer the 50th anniversary report; I will present it in July.

VIII. Fair Immigration

Mr. Valdez: We had our Immigration meeting two days ago. We discussed some important issues, such as the inclusion of some groups that are not included in the immigration legislation. Groups in Haiti have visas to come to the US but have not received travel documents. The City of Homestead is working on issuing ID cards to people from that municipality; 32 municipalities have issued ID cards. We are working on a similar resolution; once it is ready, we will present it to the County Commission.

IX. New Business

Dr. Capp: As the County is going through the budget process, we need to meet with BCC Chairwoman Rebeca Sosa, to thank her for coming to our 50th anniversary, and to discuss our staffing needs. I've drafted a letter to request a meeting with her.

Mr. Valdez: We need to stop using tax payer funding to incarcerate people. We are paying to process the cases and incarcerate them. This is a crisis because we are commercializing and politicizing our immigration situation.

X. Adjournment

There being no other business to come before the Community Relations Board, the meeting adjourned at 4:35 p.m.

Attachment to the Minutes of the June 2013 CRB General Membership Meeting. (Attached at the request of Rabbi Solomon Schiff who was unable to attend the CRB 50th Anniversary Celebration where he was recognized with a CRB Trail Blazer Award.)

Remarks for the Golden Anniversary Celebration of the Dade County Community Relations Board

May 23, 2013

By Rabbi Solomon Schiff, past CRB Chair

My wife Shirley and I came to Miami in 1955, for our honeymoon. We took a bus outside of Burdines Department Store, downtown, to Coconut Grove, to see a play. As we boarded the bus, we saw a number of black people standing in the back. We also noticed that there were several empty seats in the front. We walked to the back and said, "there are some empty seats in the front". They laughed. The bus driver called us to the front and asked, "where are you folks from?" I said, "New York", Shirley said "Chicago". The bus driver said, "you are now in the South. Blacks don't sit in the front of the bus in the South". This was our first splash of ice water.

The next day, we went to Crandon Park for a swim. We saw toilets marked, colored men-white men; colored women-white women. We then saw drinking fountains marked white and colored. When we asked why there were no blacks swimming where we were swimming, we were told blacks don't swim with whites. They have a segregated beach called Virginia Beach, in the Crandon Park area, marked "colored only".

I then saw that an important part of my ministry would include trying to eradicate this despicable lifestyle from our community.

On May 31, 1963, Archbishop Coleman F. Carroll convened an interfaith meeting of leading clergy at Miami's Columbus Hotel. I was there as President of the Rabbinical Association of Greater Miami. We issued a statement calling for equal rights for all people, in housing, employment, eating facilities and in every other human interaction. The Statement called for "community-wide action to guarantee them to all". This meeting was published by the Miami Herald on June 1, 1963. Ten days later, on June 11, 1963, the Board of County Commissioners established the Community Relations Board, which is today celebrating its Golden Anniversary.

We have come a long way during these 50 years. From a black man forced to sit in a segregated OUT HOUSE – to an African-American President sitting in the WHITE HOUSE. We have cracked the glass ceiling but we have not yet broken it.

As we begin the second half of the CRB's century, let us commit ourselves to complete the task. Let us work diligently for the day when the dream of the late Reverend Martin Luther King will be realized – that a man will be judged not by the color of his skin, but rather by the content of his character. On that day, we will change the words of the Negro spiritual, from we SHALL overcome, to we HAVE overcome. May this day be soon in coming. Thank you and may God Bless you.

	MEMBERS	PRESENT	LATE	ABSENT
1	<i>Mario Artecona,</i>			x
2	<i>Dr. Larry Capp</i>	x		
3	<i>Lyse Cuellar-Vidal</i>			x
4	<i>Priscilla Dames-Blake</i>		x	
5	<i>Valerie Lynn Davis-Bailey</i>			x
6	<i>Michell Dunaj Lucking</i>			x
7	<i>Ronald Fulton</i>	x		
8	<i>Rev. Eddie Gervais</i>	x		
9	<i>Martha Gonzalez-Rovirosa</i>			x
10	<i>Ahmed Kabani</i>	x		
11	<i>Harlene Kennedy</i>			x
12	<i>Maritza Lopez</i>		x	
13	<i>Herman Martinez</i>	x		
14	<i>Lovette McGill</i>			x
15	<i>Dr. Helen Lawrence McGuire</i>	x		
16	<i>Dr. Walter Richardson</i>			x
17	<i>Wilfredo Ruiz</i>	x		
18	<i>Brian Siegal</i>	x		
19	<i>Rabbi Solomon Schiff</i>	x		
20	<i>Edward Shohat</i>	x		

21	<i>Vickie M. Smith Jackson</i>	x		
22	<i>Farzana M. Tapia</i>			x
23	<i>Adam Tavakoly</i>	x		
24	<i>Reinaldo Valdes</i>	x		
25	<i>Dr. Harold A. Vieux</i>		x	
26	<i>L. George Yap</i>		x	
27	<i>Marjorie York</i>	x		
28				

Guests in attendance: Maria Garza, CAHSD Farmworker Jobs Program; Adria Dilme, DCF Refugee Services; Fran Gordan, MDCA Head Start; Ed Harrisw; Tanaka Charles, A Mother's Hurtin Heart, Inc.; Doublas Hill, CAHSD; David Allison, CAHSD; Vivian Rosado, Hispanic Affairs Advisory Board.