

**MIAMI-DADE COUNTY COMMISSION FOR WOMEN**  
**111 N.W. 1<sup>st</sup> Street, Suite 1034, Miami, FL 33128**  
**Minutes of Meeting of September 30, 2015**

**Present:** Clora Adkins, Leah Blumenfeld, Monica Interian, Viviana Jordan, Beverly Nixon, Linda Robinson, Maria Santamaria, Raisa Sequeira, Marie Woodson, and Mara Zapata

**Excused:** Nordis Forcade, Marie Eloi, Sharon Kendrick-Johnson, Tara Leighton, Noreen Lagault Mendoza, Francesca Menes, Kit Rafferty, and Dona Zemo

**Absent:** Phyllis Sloan-Simpkins

**Guests:** Marie Osborne, Chief of Juvenile Division from the Public Defender's Office; Kimberly Rivera and Anthony from the FIU School of Communications

**Staff:** Laura Morilla and Sussy Toyos

Chair Mara Zapata commenced the meeting at 5:50 p.m. and welcomed everyone.

Raisa moved to approve the agenda and Viviana seconded the motion. The motion passed and **the agenda was approved.**

Leah moved to approve the minutes of the CFW meeting of 06/24/15 and Viviana seconded the motion. The motion passed and **the minutes were approved.**

First there was a **presentation** by Marie Osborne, Chief of Juvenile for the Office of the Public Defender, about human trafficking. Maria explained that up until four or five years ago, the girls would be arrested for prostitution, theft, etc. Now, after the Safe Harbor Act in Florida, law enforcement may treat the child as a victim; this is a new way of looking at the girls. Marie said that the justice system is black and white, but that these girls' situations are not black and white; experience shows that relapse is inevitable, that running away is inevitable, and that "Stockholm Syndrome" is common. It may take years for the girls to get out of the cycle and they are more successful when they do it voluntarily.

Marie further explained that five years ago these girls were defendants so they got lawyers assigned to them. Now, as victims, they do not get representation. Marie believes that children who have been identified as human trafficking victims should have a lawyer appointed to them because the criminal justice agenda is contrary to the agenda of making the victim better and healing her; there are built-in tensions.

Per Marie, there are several unintended consequences: 1. No appointed lawyer to counsel the minor in the legal arena so the minor negotiates on her own in a bit of a coercive environment; the potential for leveraging criminal charges is always present. 2. Minor is typically treated as a dependent child so she gets placed in a shelter and undergoes medical and psychological exams. These exams can self-incriminate the minor. 3. Frequently in a diversion program, the minor agrees to an intervention program, and there is no legal privilege when the child tells something to a counselor or social worker in the intervention program. These people, whom the girls are supposed to trust, are subject to subpoena can be forced to tell the police what the girl said. 4. If the minor does not agree to the diversion program or fails the program, the girl can be charged. 5. Requirement of mandatory reporting of abuse. The minor may not be ready to go public; she may just now have the nerve to confide in a social worker, who then is obligated to report the abuse to the hotline. So the trust has been broken.

Human trafficking victims form coping mechanisms for street survival that are terrible for truth telling purposes. Trauma literally also alters your brain. So the conclusion is that the timetable of the child's readiness to testify is almost never in sync with the judicial system's requirements. In addition, in Florida, the defense has the right to depose the witness before the criminal trial; this is a dress rehearsal of what the trial is going to be. There is a growing movement to change this so that the minor does not have to give a deposition before a trial.

Marie also asked about what is being done to build awareness in men. Education of the "consumer" is important because they should know that they are contributing to slavery. Linda suggested that the CFW go through the County Commissioners, who can then go to their local mayors to do education and outreach. Marie then answered questions from the CFW members.

At this point there was a quorum. Viviana moved to approve the agenda and Linda seconded the motion. The motion passed and the **agenda was approved.**

Leah moved to approve the minutes of the meeting of 07/22/15 and Linda seconded the motion with corrections to the minutes. The motion passed. Then there was an additional correction by Monica. Viviana moved to approve the amended minutes and Leah seconded the motion. The motion passed and the **amended minutes were approved.**

The **Committee Reports** were then presented.

**Human Trafficking Committee.** Mara reminded everyone about the human trafficking forum on October 8<sup>th</sup> at Florida National University. The CFW is a supporter and collaborator of the forum.

**Nominating Committee.** The Nominating Committee was created to out together the slate of officers for the November elections. The members of the Committee are: Marie Woodson, Linda Robinson, Beverly Nixon, and Maria Santamaria. A fifth member may be added before the committee meeting. The committee will meet before the October CFW meeting. Laura will send out an email to all CFW members to see who is interested in running for office.

**Legislative Committee.** Leah reviewed the written committee report. Leah will present at the November Miami-Dade Legislative Delegation public hearing on behalf of the CFW. She will focus on the economic bills because the presentation is only two minutes long. Leah reported that last night she also served on a panel discussion about the ERA.

**Old Business.** Mara thanked everyone who attended the Women's Equality Day event. It was a great event, very well attended. C-SPAN recorded the event and it will air this Saturday and will be available for viewing online after Saturday.

Mara reminded everyone that the nominations deadline for the In the Company of Women awards is October 16.

Mara stated that the CEDAW ordinance passed the County Commission. The Commission Auditor will collect data in three different areas and the CFW needs to tell the Commission Auditor which area to look at first. The CFW decided to follow the recommendation of the Executive Committee and tell the Auditor to research in the following order: Economic Development; Health and Safety; and Education. A CEDAW committee was created and the members are: Raisa, Leah, Linda, Marie Woodson, Clora, and Monica.

**New Business.** Raisa mentioned that the Woman's Club of Hialeah was having a breast cancer fundraiser tomorrow and that tickets were available at the door.

Mara reminded everyone that the next on the road meeting is on October 28<sup>th</sup> at 6 p.m. in Miami Springs at the Curtiss Mansion, 500 Deer Run. The Curtiss Mansion is a wonderful restored historic site next to the golf course.

Laura reported that she attended a meeting this morning with local women elected officials and international women visitors from various countries in the Middle East. Laura had been asked to set up the meeting a few weeks ago by Global Ties Miami, which hosts these international visitors who are invited to visit the U.S. by the State Department.

Viviana asked if the CFW could request data from the Miami-Dade Police Department about domestic violence crimes by Commission districts, and also, if this data would include information from municipalities in the Commission districts. Maria Santamaria will try to get the data.

**Attendance at Community Events.** Mara and Sharon attended the Doral Women's Equality Day event. Raisa attended the Voices of Women event at FIU on August 22<sup>nd</sup>.

The meeting adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

Laura Morilla  
Recorder